# METAL SMITH

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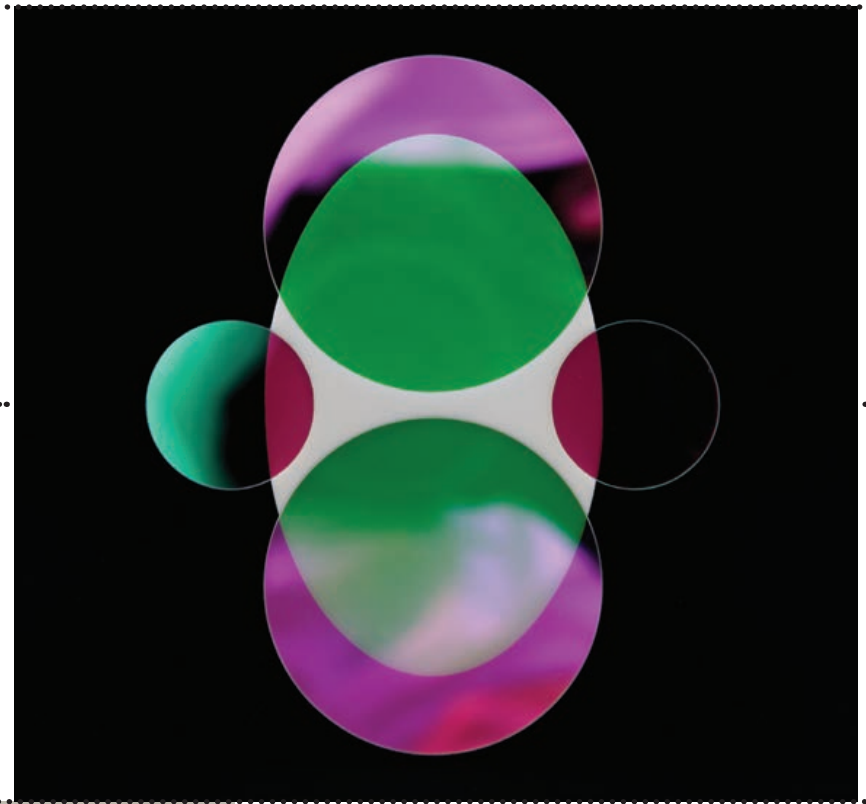
METAL



Jiro Kamata:
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Sight

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Martha
Glowacki:
Science, Art,
and Style

Twenty-First
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# METALSMITH




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*Metalsmith* is published by the Society of North American Goldsmiths

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www.snagmetalsmith.org

The Society of North American Goldsmiths advances jewelry and metalsmithing by inspiring creativity, encouraging education, and fostering community.

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**Printer** Allied Printing, committed to using environmentally friendly materials and methods.

*Metalsmith* (ISSN 0270-1146) is published both in print and digital formats in February, May, August, and November by SNAG, PO Box 1355, Eugene, OR 97440, 541.345.5689, www.snagmetalsmith.org.

Membership rates: $85/year and up, full membership includes four-issue subscription to *Metalsmith*. Special student rates. Subscription to only *Metalsmith*: $31/year and up.

**Postmaster/Members/ Subscribers/Copies**
*Metalsmith* is not forwarded by the post office. Send all address changes and any other requests, including missing issues, to SNAG, PO Box 1355, Eugene, OR 97440, 541.345.5689, info@snagmetalsmith.org. Claims for missing issues are accepted only if received within three months of publication.

The opinions expressed in *Metalsmith* are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the staff or directors of SNAG or *Metalsmith*.

*Metalsmith* is indexed in the Art Index and EBSCO Media. Newsstand distribution: COMAG Marketing Group, 155 Village Blvd, Princeton, NJ 08540.



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Most people are in accord with the popular adage "seeing is believing." Though less acknowledged, the contrary also holds true: "believing is seeing," and predispositions can shape how and what we perceive. Inherently eye catching, jewelry and metalwork serve as a potent means for testing vision and observation. This issue's two featured artists, Jiro Kamata and Martha Glowacki, give our eyes and minds a workout with their material explorations of illusion, reflection, and other forms of perception.

For nearly 20 years jeweler Jiro Kamata has been preoccupied with optical dynamics. His investigations have resulted in works that incorporate crosshairs, camera lenses, industrial glass, and mirrors. Through a sophisticated choreography of reflection and distortion, Kamata seeks to transport viewers to another state of mind. The artist's visual feats are informed by ideas rooted in traditional Japanese aesthetics and religion. While Kamata's jewelry "is technically inventive and dazzling," writes Ursula Ilse-Neuman, "it is the philosophical underpinnings of his creations that sustain our interest."

In a similar vein, Martha Glowacki examines how systems of thought color the way we see the world, often blurring subjective and objective realms. Having earlier probed scientific illustration and apparatuses from the 18th and 19th centuries, Glowacki now turns her attention to early modern perspectival devices and illusionistic methods. Her historically styled objects and installations stage visual encounters that reveal conceptual blind spots and the limitations of sight. According to author Glen Brown, "The effect of Glowacki's works is to inflect the process of empirical observation and rational analysis of nature with ambiguity, even enigma."

Kamata and Glowacki both aim to demonstrate the contingency of vision, as it is embedded in time, space, and individual circumstance. To that end they both knowingly engage mirrors in their work, reflecting back onto viewers who they are as much as what they see. *—Suzanne Ramljak, Editor*



**The mission of *Metalsmith* is to explore, analyze, promote and document excellence and innovation in the field of jewelry and metalsmithing. In achieving this goal, SNAG will produce and oversee the direction and content of a publication that will serve as a significant resource for the metalsmithing field. The editorial content of *Metalsmith* will emphasize contemporary activities, makers, and ideas and incorporate supportive content, relevant critical issues and the exchange of viewpoints.**



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"Grandma said they were diamonds"
Steel & Cement
By Jim Cotter

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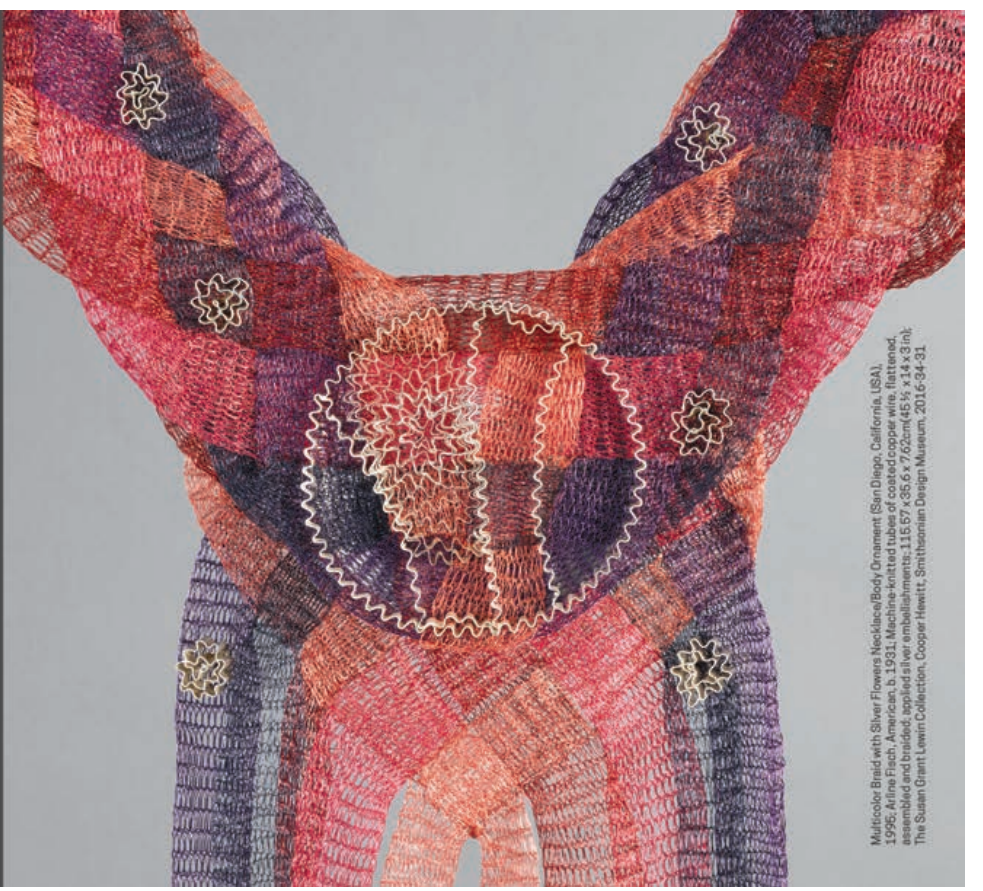

Multicolor Braid with Silver Flowers Necklace/Body Ornament (San Diego, California, USA), 1995; Arline Fisch, American, b. 1931; Machine-knitted tubes of coated copper wire, flattened, assembled and braided; applied silver embellishments; 115.57 x 35.6 x 7.62cm (45 ½ x 14 x 3 in); The Susan Grant Lewin Collection, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 2016-34-31




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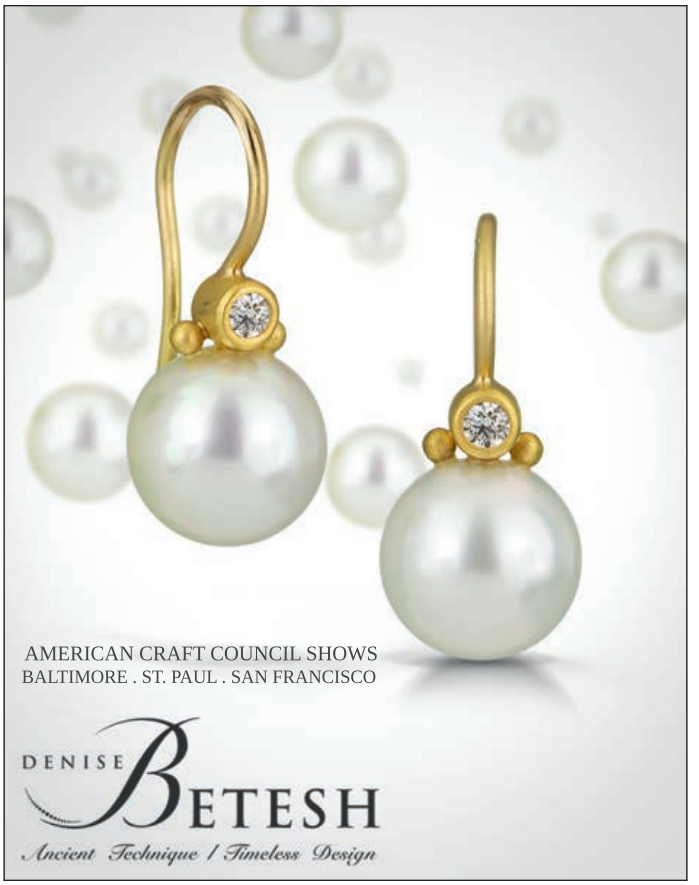

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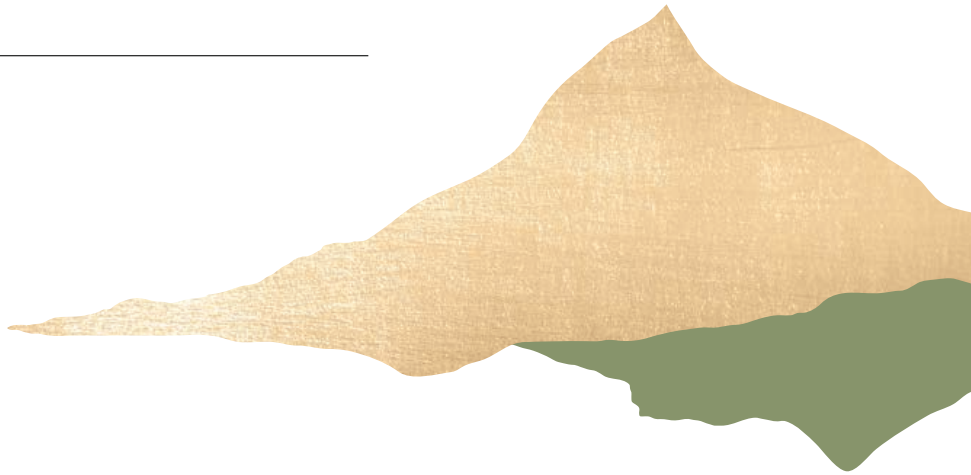
Makers Across Disciplines Engage focuses on materials, art, design, and interdisciplinary collaboration. While celebrating traditional and innovative techniques alike, we seek to engage makers and other creative individuals who push the boundaries of our field with a cross-media sensibility.



# SPEAKERS:

### Keynote
Vivian Beer

### Mainstage Duo
Randy Long
Katja Toporski

### Early Career Artists
Peter Antor
Thomas Campbell
Yvonne Escalante
Tania Larsson
Caitlin Skelcey

### Mainstage Presentations
Jack da Silva
Nick Dong
Nicolas Estrada
Teresa Frye
Thomas Gentille

### Lunchtime Talk
Carrie Cleveland
Fred Woell Documentary Screening

### Rapid Fire Presentations
Jessica Calderwood
Bifei Cao
Gary Dawson
A Tribute to Ron Ho by Julia Lowther
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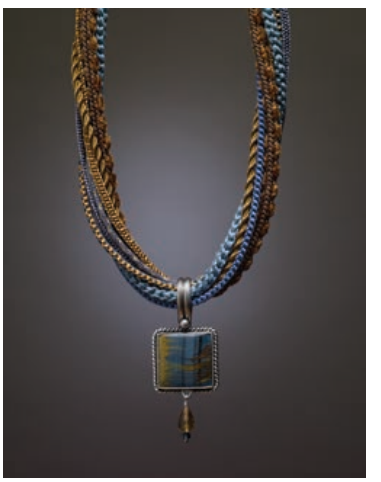

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# NEW & NOTABLE

BY KATE FOGARTY



## THE PROMISE OF A PALM

With the U.S. and China both having banned the sales of elephant ivory in 2017, and Britain not far behind, one hopes that the slaughter of elephants by poachers will slow to a full stop. According to the World Wildlife Fund, there are now only around 415,000 elephants across Africa, down from as many as five million a century ago. And while this is good news for elephants, and the planet in general, what material will take the place of this creamy, easily carved and polished substance, which has been so gorgeously incorporated into jewelry over the ages? While one alternative is, believe it or not, ivory harvested from the excavated tusks of thousands-of-years-dead woolly mammoths in the Siberian tundra, a far more promising and affordable alternative is the tagua nut, found in the South American rainforest. The seed of six different species of palm tree (genus name *Phytelephas*, also known as the ivory palm), it is shaped like a small avocado and becomes hard when dried. And the harvesting of the tagua nut not only benefits the elephants, but could serve as an economically viable alternative to cutting down rainforests as well.

While the tagua nut was exported to Europe as a substitute to ivory as early as the 19th century, in recent years it has become even more desirable. Heerma van Voss, a leading exporter of Ecuadoran tagua nut, told the BBC in 2016 that his company's dried and sliced tagua typically retails for $30/kg, while the raw seeds sell for $6/kg. (By contrast, a kilogram of ivory is as much as $1,100 in China.)

Bali-based jewelry designer Alexandra Mor works with local master goldsmiths to create high-end pieces incorporating the tagua nut. In 2017 she partnered with *Vogue Italia* to inspire a group of jewelers to create tagua nut pieces for its third annual "U.S. Protagonists" showcase, highlighting "mindful luxury." The 12 designers included Mor, 1884 Collection, Coomi, Hind Matar, John Hardy, JvdF, K. Brunini Jewels, KC Sukamto, Kristin Hanson, MCL Design, Sharon Khazzam, and Sylva & Cie. The co-host of the event was luxury e-commerce website 1stdibs.com, on which many of the pieces are being sold. Twenty percent of the proceeds will go to Mount Kenya Trust, an organization instrumental in elephant habitat conservation. Mor explained to *The Jewellery Editor* website: "In one year, a single tagua palm can produce as much ivory as an average African elephant can in its lifetime. It holds the power to shift our destructive ways of consuming through suffering to a more sustainable, peaceful, and compassionate paradigm."

Alexandra Mor's *Hoop Earrings*, in carved Subang tagua seed and black wood. Photo: Russell Starr.

## ALL THAT GLITTERS: NICK CAVE AT MASS MOCA

As a resident of Chicago, a city that has suffered more than 900 incidents of gun violence in 2017 alone, African-American fabric sculptor, Alvin Ailey–trained dancer, and performance artist Nick Cave is taking action. He's observed the extent to which many Americans have compartmentalized the causes and effects of this violence; it's happening somewhere, to someone, but not to *them*. "We read about what's going on in these communities, but we choose to be disconnected, to shun ourselves from it," Cave told *ARTNews* magazine in 2017.



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Installation views of Nick Cave's *Until* at MASS MoCA. Photo courtesy MASS MoCA.

Director of the graduate fashion program at School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Cave came to prominence for his colorful, wearable sculptures, called *Soundsuits.* He made his first *Soundsuit* out of twigs in 1992, in response to the Rodney King beating, as a physical and conceptual shield against the brutality inflicted on black bodies in the U.S. In the two-plus decades since, he has created and exhibited numerous iterations. *Soundsuits* have also been featured in performance pieces, videos, and photographs.

A visual manifesto about social justice, Cave's recent installation, *Until,* put the mass in MASS MoCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams) last summer: it was *huge.* The museum's more than 250,000 square feet of exhibition space over 26 buildings on a former factory complex has allowed for unbridled interior and exterior explorations by some of the world's leading artists since its opening in 1999. Cave commandeered the football-field-sized main exhibition hall with a series of kinetic environments crafted of found materials. The visitor was immersed in a field of metallic lawn ornaments (including more than 16,000 wind spinners) that led to a heavy cloud crafted of 10 miles' worth of crystals, topped by a garden populated with birds, flowers, and black-face lawn jockeys accessible by four ladders, culminating in a cliff wall hand-woven of shoelaces and millions of colorful pony beads. Interspersed throughout were images of targets, guns, and teardrops. The title refers to the word's placement at the center of two inherently American phrases: "innocent until proven guilty," and its uncomfortably common reciprocal, "guilty until proven innocent." The dazzling spaces were dense with objects, movement, and menace.

"I wanted to open the show with this sensation of something extraordinary and magical and beautiful and yet, once you realize what you're looking at you're like, 'not so pretty,' " Cave told *ARTNews.* The experience is meant to provoke dialogue, and has inspired both invited and impromptu responses from artists including poets, gospel singers, musicians, and dancers. A book about the project, *Until,* was published by Prestel. The show will travel to its co-commissioning venues, Carriageworks in Sydney, Australia, in 2018, and Arkansas's Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in 2019.

→



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## STAYING IN BUSINESS

There is good news and bad news in the latest research about the state of the jewelry industry. A report by Jewelers Board of Trade (JBT) on the third quarter of 2017 indicated that the rate of jewelry business closures had slowed. In that period, 236 North American jewelry businesses either closed, merged or were acquired, or went bankrupt. That's a 40 percent drop from the same quarter in 2016, and the third consecutive quarter that the rate of closures has fallen. JBT's report found that the majority of this year's discontinued businesses were in the retail sector, while the closures of wholesale businesses and manufacturing companies were smaller and about even. JBT acting president Richard Weisenfeld says that some of these businesses are dying of natural causes. "The fact remains that there are a lot of stores that are not in bad shape but there is no second generation to step in," he told JCK Online.

While there continued to be consolidation in the jewelry industry in 2017, at least it was a vast improvement on the year before. According to the 15th annual Bain Luxury Study, published at the end of 2016 by Bain & Company, in 2016 the uncertainty before the US presidential elections, Brexit in the UK, and lower tourist flows in major European capitals partly due to terrorist attacks flattened the global luxury market and the taste for high-end spending. In the broader U.S. retail sector, Credit Suisse reported in April 2017 that some 2,880 brick-and-mortar stores had closed that year so far, compared with 1,153 in the same period of 2016. But the majority of these stores were associated with large chains, struggling to compete with online retailers.

It's worth remembering that businesses close for any number of reasons: retirements, consolidations, a failure to keep up with today's fast-paced digital retail and marketing environment, heightened service, inventory, and delivery expectations, and more. And jewelry sales in recent months actually have been increasing bit by bit. "[Consolidation]'s always talked about in a negative way, but the survivors will be doing more business," Harold Dupuy, FGA, vice president strategic analysis of Stuller Inc. in Lafayette, Louisiana, told the Manufacturing Jewelers & Suppliers of America's website. He believes the industry could expect sales to be up 1 to 3 percent in 2017. Here's to a prosperous 2018!

Although the San Francisco gallery closed in summer 2017, Velvet da Vinci still maintains a strong digital presence.

## FASHIONABLE DREAMS

Now in her nineties, French artist Claude Lalanne has taken up a new career: that of jewelry designer. For most of her career, Claude was one-half of the celebrated artist duo Les Lalanne; the other half was her husband, François-Xavier. From 1956 until François-Xavier's death in 2008, the couple created an amazing and prolific array of whimsical, surreal sculptures, ranging from animal-like furniture to

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life-sized rhinos and sheep to garlanded mirrors to flatware. Lalanne collectors include luminaries of the fashion world, including designers Tom Ford, Karl Lagerfeld, and Marc Jacobs, as well as French business magnates François-Henri Pinault and Bernard Arnault.

While Les Lalanne created the occasional piece of jewelry over their more than 50-year collaboration, it is only recently that Claude began to truly explore the form. In 2016, London's Louisa Guinness Gallery presented "Butterflies et Bijoux," the first-ever show of Claude's jewelry and small sculptures, which garnered quite a bit of interest. Exhibited in a jewelry chest of Lalanne's own design, pieces such as the silver wrapped vine necklace *Collier Groseilles*, galvanized copper amaranth drop earrings, and a gilded bronze butterfly ring hardly seemed the work of a neophyte.

And now Claude is not just collected by the fashion world, she's a celebrated member. She was invited in 2016 by Maria Grazia Churi, then newly anointed designer of the House of Dior, to create jewelry for Chiuri's first runway show in January 2017. Chiuri was inspired by Christian Dior's love of gardens and created an enchanted forest replete with a moss-covered runway. Lalanne's electroplated copper pieces took the theme and blossomed with it. Necklaces with butterflies, flowers, and brambles wound around the model's necks, while belts of foliage delicately circled their waists.

Lalanne's pieces for Dior were included in the blockbuster show "Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams" at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, which closed in January. Celebrating the 70th anniversary of the creation of the House of Dior, this lavish and comprehensive exhibition encompassed the entire 32,000-square-foot space. Keep an eye out for other U.S. venues, and for the next flights of fancy of Claude Lalanne: "I dream when I am awake," she told the *Financial Times* in 2017. "There is nothing left over by night."

Below and opposite: Electroplated copper rings and necklace designed by Claude Lalanne for Christian Dior's 2017 runway show.

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# SARAH RACHEL BROWN

BY ANDREA DINOTO

Sarah Rachel Brown with clients at the Big Crafty fair at Ashville Art Museum, 2015.

**LAST SUMMER,** Sarah Rachel Brown completed an idyllic, if at times chilly, internship at the estimable Kot Gallery in Ellsworth, Maine, where she was provided with a rustic cabin and a $400 monthly stipend. “I was learning about merchandising, shopping, understanding what people are drawn to, price points, and such,” she says, “and in exchange I was utilizing my social media skills to update Kot’s online shop.” Brown is a multi-skilled, multi-tasker who is not yet sure of the direction her work and life might ultimately take. She began to make jewelry in 2009, and has since armed herself with impressive craft credentials, created at least two viable production lines, and earned a slot as an emerging artist at the 2017 Philadelphia Museum of Art Craft Show. This was Brown’s first-ever craft fair experience, and it occurred in her new hometown. From 2011 to 2016 she’d been attending Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina and Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Tennessee. Needing a place to settle, she chose Philly as “the cheapest, biggest city with proximity to Baltimore, D.C., and New York.”

Before taking up jewelry making, Brown studied music and voice, both in high school and college. At Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa, she excelled in audio production and was assistant on-air music director of the school’s alternative radio station. But, uninterested in academics, Brown dropped out and became a roadie with rock bands, touring the West Coast, loading gear, and selling merchandise. (She still appears occasionally as a singer with bands, notably Country Lips, in Seattle.) In 2009, living in Seattle, Brown took a beginning-metals night class at Pratt Fine Arts Center. “I was confused as to what metalsmithing was!” she says. There she encountered instructor Sarah Loertscher, who became her mentor, and employed her as an apprentice in her studio for three years. Loertscher encouraged her to go to Penland, where she was awarded a Core Fellowship, a two-year work-study program for emerging artists.

Brown developed her “Everyday” production line at Penland, “out of necessity,” she says, to pay for studio fees, personal expenses, and art materials. The line of earrings, pendants, rings, bangles, and studs was sold in the school’s Core Fellow galleries, and she says, “I wouldn’t have gotten through without





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*Inclinations no.4*, 2017
sterling silver, steel,
opaque glass
2 3/4 x 1 3/4 x 1"

it." Made from commercially available hammered and soldered beaded wire, "Everyday" is notable for its utter simplicity, of both technique and form. It is based on three geometric shapes (oval, circle and teardrop) worked in sterling silver and 18k gold.

The idea for a second line also took shape at Penland, where a workshop in stone-setting led to the development of Brown's unisex "Inclinations" line. High-prong settings of cold-worked silver and steel hold large commercially available vintage rhinestones in white and jewel colors. For the 2017 PMA Craft Show, she created a series of 30 brooches, each different, "reflective of the 'Inclinations' series that plays more with scale." In developing her lines, Brown emphasizes that she "does not think about production and price points, so as to allow myself the dive into more contemporary jewelry." Speaking of which, in 2015 a professional development grant from Arrowmont enabled her to attend a Schmuck exhibition in Munich, Germany, for the first time—"Amazing exhibitions! Not production work! Maybe wearable!" There she met a group of women exhibitors from Philadelphia's JV Collective, who invited her to join them and share studio space. The next year, Brown became a Niche Awards finalist, for work in silver and stones.

While skilled in the mechanics of social media, Brown takes an unusual approach to marketing. "I use Instagram to tell my story," she says, not just to post images of work. Similarly, her website features lively podcasts of Brown in conversation with people she believes can help artisans understand the field in more depth. An able interviewer, Brown has featured Rea Rossi on "My First Craft Show" and Emily Cobb discussing "The Adjunct Hustle." She keeps her Facebook page updated because "if you don't, it shows you don't care."

Still, Brown continually asks herself: Do I want to be a fulltime maker or a facilitator in my community? Pondering the question, she declares: "I love making production jewelry. There's comfort in the repetitive process. My hands take over and my mind wanders, leading me to some of my best ideas." She adds, "and it makes me money. Ain't nothin' wrong with that."

*Andrea DiNoto writes on art, craft, and design.*

*Clustered Oval Necklace* from
"Everyday Collection," 2017
sterling silver
11 x 5 1/4"



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# PAUL MCCLURE

BY BARBARA ISHERWOOD

**IN THE WORLD OF PAUL MCCLURE,** small is beautiful. In his compact studio in Toronto, the Bronfman Award–winning artist creates jewelry inspired by the human body as seen through the microscope.

"It's like the jewelry cave," says the artist of his home-based workspace. Originally sited in the basement of the central Toronto home he shares with husband, design director Tom Keogh, the studio moved up to the front room of the main floor about five years ago. "It's a little bit separate from the living quarters," says McClure. "It's nice because clients can come right into the studio without having to go into the home."

The well-organized space has the full range of equipment McClure needs to produce his eye-catching work. A bright-red workbench for fabrication is situated beside a frosted window that provides light and privacy at the same time. On the wall above the bench is a place to pin concept sketches, but the real designing comes through making. Gesturing towards the loosely assembled elements of a work in progress, McClure says, "I'm not one of those designers who does everything on paper, then goes to bench and makes it. I think through my hands. Things evolve at the workbench."

The opposite side of the studio accommodates "messier" work. "I have a ventilation system which can be applied to both fumes and particles, so I can do hand polishing at this bench," says McClure. In addition to the polishing lathe there's a rolling mill, hydraulic press, belt sander, soldering station with oxypropylene and acetylene tanks, and of course a wide assortment of hand tools. And let's not forget the "trusty old tree stump for forming. I've lugged that around for about 25 years," he says.

On the wall that once featured a fireplace is McClure's desk, and his library of books, arranged on shelves that surround the original mantelpiece. Not surprisingly, volumes on human biology, ranging from the standard *Gray's Anatomy* to the *Pop-Up Book of the Human Body,* figure prominently. The artist also has a comprehensive collection of books on the history of jewelry, references for a course that he developed for George Brown College, where he is professor and program coordinator of jewelry studies.

The desk houses McClure's laptop and a small microscope used primarily for fine measurements. A larger, high-powered digital microscope resides in a dust-free area. He views specimens through the LCD screen, and can take images and videos with the built-in digital camera. "Microscopy has always been





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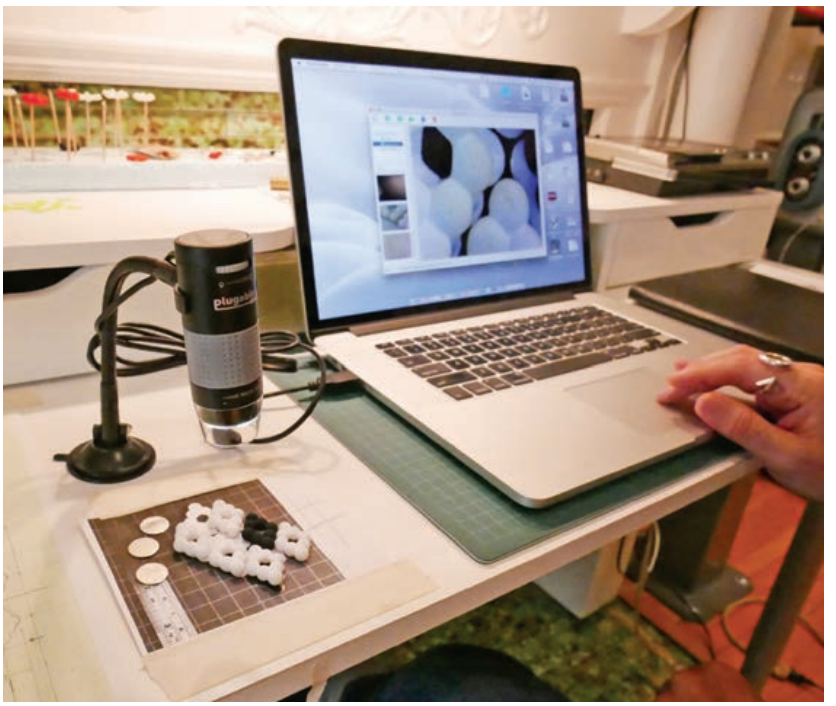

Above: Desk area of Paul McClure's studio with small microscope.

Opposite: Paul McClure at the fabrication bench in his Toronto studio.

a big part of my work, in terms of microbiology as inspiration," says the artist, who uses both primary sources and pre-existing imagery as starting points for designs.

McClure's interest in human anatomy dates back to his days as a graduate student at the National College of Art and Design in Dublin. "It's been my anchor for 20-plus years," he says. "One of the fundamental ideas about my work is that it's about the body, and jewelry is for the body." Themes he has explored include biomolecules, cellular structures, and stem cell research and pathology—prompted in part by the AIDS crisis.

But while biology is the starting point, McClure's jewelry never descends into schematic pedantry. "If they look too much like a scientific model, they lose the emotion," he notes. In *Orthomyxovirus,* a brooch from his 2012 "Mutation" series, gleaming silver and brilliant red corundums are fashioned into a fantastic three-part form, in which pattern and geometry are balanced by delightful asymmetry. Who knew the common flu could inspire such unexpected loveliness? Rings in the "Antibodies" series, in 3D printed steel and silver, are simple and striking, functioning as both pure design and as a symbol of the incredible powers the body has to heal itself. *Morula,* 2009, a hollow-form brooch, is fashioned in the shape of an embryonic stem cell. Slicing away part of the surface reveals internal patterns, while also suggesting the laboratory procedures entailed in the controversial practice of stem cell research. Brooches in the "Flora" series combine botanical and biological references, highlighting the universality of pattern in all forms of life.

McClure's current project, "Membranes," is a series taking him into even more miniscule realms, namely the nanoscale. At his fabrication bench McClure points to a diamond-shaped cluster of small nylon balls, which will be grouped together and surrounded by a silver frame. The balls represent the receptors on cell membranes, which McClure explains can be harnessed to treat cancer, by "delivering drugs directly to cells that need it, as opposed to chemotherapy, where you are delivering it through the entire body."

"Membranes" combines metal fabrication with nylon forms made using 3D printing, a technology McClure first began investigating in his role as a jewelry professor. "I'll go through the process of using [a new technology] to make sure I can then teach it, and relate to what the students are doing," he says. "I like that, because it makes me stay current. Sometimes you get some really nice surprises."

Of his current interest in the digital realm, McClure says, "One of the great things about computer modeling and 3D printing is scale, and scale has always been a big part of my work, zooming in and zooming out of the human body." Pointing to the repeating elements in the "Membranes" series, he says, "I like the idea of pattern as the metaphor for multiplication and replication. As they move up in scale, they divide and become these other shapes, ornamental or decorative. These have a gemmy quality."

In the hall opposite McClure's studio door are three showcases filled with jewelry: pieces acquired through trades with other artists; purchases made on his travels; work by admired jewelers (including many fellow Canadians); and pieces by graduates of George Brown College. "I wear a brooch every day," says the artist, who for the past decade has focused his collecting on brooches or rings. There's a case containing his own work, which he describes as handy when clients come by. Characterized by punchy design and streamlined elegance, the collection provides a wonderful visual history of McClure's two-plus decades of delving deep into the human body.

*Barbara Isherwood is a Toronto-based writer, educator, and broadcaster.*

Opposite, top:
*Membrane 3*, 2017
sterling silver, 3D printed nylon, stainless steel
3 3/4 x 1 1/2 x 1 1/8"
Photo: Digital by Design



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# CASTING ABOUT

BY JEN TOWNSEND AND RENÉE ZETTLE-STERLING

1

**OUR RECENT BOOK,** *CAST: Art and Objects Created Using Humanity's Most Transformational Process* (Schiffer Publishing, 2017) was inspired by contemporary jewelry and metalsmithing, but it examines objects cast in all materials over the last 6,000 years. The jewelry shown on these pages demonstrates the diversity in media, process, and outcome that compelled us to write this book.

Historical objects in *CAST* are every bit as sophisticated as their contemporary counterparts. They also remind us that we're part of a continuum of makers that stretches back millennia.

Casting through the ages has been defined by the use of molds. Infinitely versatile, molds can be used to create multiples and/or repetition of form within a single piece. Molds can capture ephemera, like a fleeting human expression or the transience of nature. Found objects can be reproduced and manipulated, and the wax clones that come from molds can be cast as is or they can be altered to create one-offs. Just about anything can be molded. In jewelry, the hand-carved wax model is the traditional approach, but the options are limitless.

From precious metals to porcelain, from concrete to plastic, there are endless casting mediums available, allowing makers to choose the right material(s) for the piece at hand. Sculptural, textured, expressive, dimensional, narrative, one-of-a-kind, and infinitely reproducible, casting offers a multiplicity impossible to achieve by other means. Casting, our many-faced god, has given form to the visions of makers for thousands of years; and jewelry, small and potent, has been the beneficiary of these alchemical blessings from on high.

*Jen Townsend and Renée Zettle-Sterling are metalsmiths, authors, and teachers with an insatiable passion for casting of all varieties.*

1
Vernon Bowden
*Banker's Ring*, 2008
American silver
liberty dollar
1 1/2 × 1 1/4 × 1 1/4"
Photo: Vernon Bowden



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2
**Tom McCarthy**
*Bucks County Brooch,* 2011
bronze, concrete, gold leaf, paint, rust, India ink
1 3/4 × 2 × 1/4"
Photo: Jan Spencley

3
**David Giulietti**
*Moon Curve Earrings,* 2014
sterling silver, 18k and 22k gold, diamonds, moonstone
3 x 1 1/2 x 3/8"
Photo: Hap Sakwa

4
**Peter Hoogeboom**
*Mokume Gane Holland Hulu,* 2014
Taiwanese porcelain, silver, artificial rubber
9 3/4 x 9 3/4 x 1 3/4"
Photo: Conor Vella

2

3

4



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5

6

7

8

5
**Anna Johnson**
*Solstice Brooch*, 2014
rodent skull, fire opals, cast ancient bronze, ground cedar, 23K gold leaf, fine silver, sterling silver
3 × 1 1/2 × 3/4"
Photo: Mary Vogel

6
**Manya Tessler**
*Deer in the Forest* (ring set), 2012
18k gold, sterling silver, uvarovite druzy, garnet, diamonds, onyxes, tri-color tourmaline
2 × 2 1/2 × 3/4"
Photo: Hap Sakwa

7
**(Greco-Roman) Egypt**
*Pantheistic Deity Pendant*, late 4th-mid 3rd century BC
gold
1 5/8 x 1 3/8 x 1/2"
Courtesy of The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

8
**German Kabirski**
*Untitled*, 2008
18k gold, tourmaline
1 × 3/4 × 1"
Photo: German Kabirski



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9

10

9
**Ruudt Peters**
*CORPUS "ovarium"*, 2011
cast polyurethane, silver
4 × 6 3/8 × 1 1/4"
Photo: Rob Versluys,
Collection of the CODA
Museum, Apeldoorn

10
**Simone De Bernard Mas**
*Lip Service*, 2011
bronze, sterling silver
6 1/2 × 2 1/2"
Photo: Tabatha Mudra



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# TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SILVER: NOT YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S TEA SET

In the hands of contemporary artists, traditional forms of silver hollowware are given new luster and meaning. BY JEANNINE FALINO

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**Wendy Yothers**
*Gotham tête-à-tête Beverage Service,*
2017
silver
11 x 15 x 11"

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Why are we no longer accustomed to seeing silver hollowware in America? What happened to the lustrous pieces that once graced American homes and represented elegance, sophistication, and respectability? Today America's once-vaunted silver industry has largely imploded, and few studio silversmiths make hollowware a central part of their practice. Silver no longer holds a place of honor in our lives as the preferred medium for domestic or ecclesiastical use, for marking important passages in life, or as trophies. Recent surveys of newlyweds show that they prefer the gift of money for a honeymoon or home, as opposed to a set of silver flatware like those once treasured by their parents and grandparents.

A little background is in order. Prized since ancient times, silver has been long valued much like coins for the market-based wealth it represents, as well as for the useful and beautiful objects that can be made from this pliable and precious material. In colonial America, silver objects were understood as tangible assets, offering financial security in a world without many alternatives, and it was the treasure lovingly bestowed at births, weddings, and funerals.

After silver was struck in Nevada's Comstock Lode in 1859, the metal became a more affordable luxury. The drop in prices fed America's appetite for silver, and manufacturers like Gorham Manufacturing Co. and Tiffany & Co. multiplied to compete in this expanding market. Meanwhile, members of the 19th-century middle and upper class competed to set groaning sideboards with glittering arrays of tea sets and specialized serving forms like oyster forks, tomato servers, and asparagus tongs.

This trend continued for nearly a hundred years, but by the mid-20th century, the tempo of life was leaving silver behind. Women entering the workplace had less time to prepare meals, and sought quick solutions to put food on the table. As time for preparing elaborate dinners dwindled, so did the hours available to polish silver. Family meals became simpler affairs, and silver was relegated to distant drawers, taken out for holidays or special occasions.

Despite these radical cultural shifts, recently some silversmiths have been unearthing a new expressive language as they distance themselves from the strictly functional origins of the field. They are interrogating silver as a medium while investigating its rich cultural history, with the goal of activating a conversation that is

Courtney Starrett
*Modern Dowry Teapot*, 2017
3D-sintered nylon, copper- and silver-plated
9 1/2 x 9 1/4 x 8 1/2"



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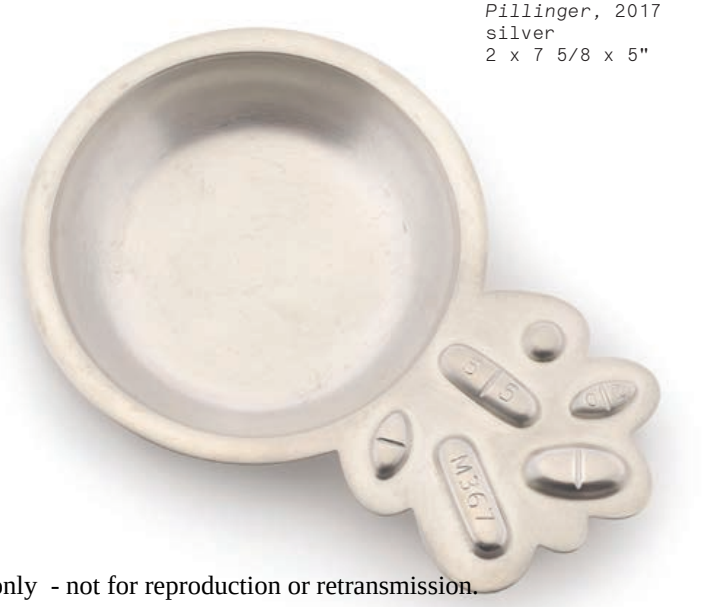
content- and sculpture-driven, akin to their peers working in jewelry, as well as their colleagues in glass, ceramics, and wood.

The forerunner of this trend was famed RISD professor and Reed & Barton designer-craftsman John Prip, who in the 1970s wished to go beyond the craft in which he was so rigorously trained. Prips's audacious "leaking" vessels, surrealistic forms, and towering totems were nominally functional but were more closely allied with the art world than with traditional silversmithing. Fortunately the field has been busy catching up with him.

The exhibition "New York Silver, Then and Now," on view at the Museum of the City of New York through June 2018, also goes beyond the functional into wide-ranging territory of craft theory, social activism, feminism, humor, and technology. The curatorial concept behind the exhibition was to present a dialogue between 25 contemporary artists, silversmiths, and designers from the New York area and the museum's outstanding silver collection.[1] The challenge to each participant was to change the prevailing notion of hollowware and flatware as "your grandmother's silver" into something more resonant with their own practice. Artists were invited to consider the museum's renowned silver collection as a sort of laboratory in which they could closely examine objects and learn more about the history and use of each. They handled candlesticks, tankards, yachting trophies, tea services, flasks, spoons, and brandywine bowls, among many other forms. Metalsmiths formed the majority of participants, but a range of disciplines were represented, including industrial designers, architects, interior designers, and artists working in other media, with the goal of bringing new perspectives to the field.

As might be expected, such a diverse group of makers yielded a wide range of interpretations and approaches to fabrication. Some of the newly made works retain their traditional function, while others were transformed to serve new purposes, such as a porringer reinvented by industrial designer Constantin Boym as a "pillinger" for medicine. Social commentary punctuated many of the objects, whether it addressed the role of women, of indifference, or the slave labor once used to mine this precious metal. Aluminum and other non-precious metals were also included in some of the pieces in the exhibition, in keeping with the current perspective on metalsmithing

SILVERSMITHS HAVE BEEN UNEARTHING A NEW EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE AS THEY DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM THE STRICTLY FUNCTIONAL ORIGINS OF THE FIELD.



Constantin Boym
*Pillinger*, 2017
silver
2 x 7 5/8 x 5"



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that embraces a wider range of materials. As a group, these new objects probe the changing role and enduring appeal of a medium with a history of utility, enjoyment, and value. The artists' finished works, paired with their historic counterparts, offer fresh ways of thinking about this gleaming and versatile medium.

Like most functional objects, historical silver carries plenty of cultural baggage. As a precious metal with value beyond its artistic or utilitarian purpose, that baggage is heavier still. Beyond the standard art-historical considerations of ownership, engraving, style, function, and technique, one must consider silver's value as a commodity, and by extension, the human capital expended in its extraction from the earth.

It was through this cultural prism that several artists approached their work. Courtney Starrett designed a teapot with wide curves, emulating an early 19th-century teapot with pronounced lobes or bulges along its side. Starrett molded the curving shape of the *Modern Dowry* teapot to an approximation of her current state of debt (concave curves) and savings (convex curves). Through this design she comments on the custom of providing brides with dowries through silver teapots and other measures of family wealth, as opposed to today's couples, who often bring college debt and other outstanding bills to their unions. Starrett's completely functional teapot was made with some 21st-century assistance, including copper- and silverplated 3D-sintered nylon.

Prompted by a cowrie shell snuff box in the museum's collection, Laurene Leon Boym reflected on the finely ground tobacco that was once typically inhaled through the nostrils, chewed, or placed against the gums, and its relation to another stimulant currently at the center of a national debate: marijuana. Using the snuff box as a model, Boym designed a palm-sized *Nug Box* to hold marijuana buds, or nugs, with chased silver leaves serving as a lid. She created the egg-shaped base using 3D ceramic printing, and the lid with the help of Ted Muehling Studio.

Michele Oka Doner's investigation of the same snuff box, with its shell body, led to an examination of her vast personal collection of found organic and inorganic objects. She selected three for casting into a trio of small, deeply textured boxes called *Volcanic, Erosion,* and *Sedimentary,* meant to be held and touched.

Because social activism and advocacy lies at the center of Chitra Ganesh's

Charles Irish
*Snuff Box*, 1812
cowrie shell, silver
1 1/2 x 2 7/8 x 1 7/8"
Collection of Museum of the City of New York

Michele Oka Doner
*Erosion Box*, 2017
silver
3 1/2 x 6 x 3 1/2"

Laurene Leon Boym
*Nug Box*, 2017
3D-printed ceramic bowl
1 1/2 x 2 7/8 x 1 7/8"



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**Joseph Leddell and Hugues Lossieux**
*Beaker*, 1707-08
pewter
height 3"
Collection of Museum of the City of New York

**Chitra Ganesh**
*Beaker Honoring Hart Island*, 2017
silver
height 2 3/4"





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**Tiffany & Co**
*Askos Pitcher*, ca. 1873-78
silver, gilt
10 1/2 x 9 x 8"
Collection of Museum of the City of New York

**Robert Lobe**
*Forest Moonlight*, 2017
aluminum, stainless steel, fine silver
55 x 42 x 28 1/4"



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practice, she responded strongly to an anti-Catholic beaker of 1708 in the museum's collection made by Hugues Lossieux and Joseph Leddel. The cup's engravings of hell and its hateful language, directed at colonial Catholics by the dominant Protestants, led Ganesh to contemplate indignities suffered by other local populations. She thought of Hart Island, New York's cemetery for the indigent. With more than a million souls interred, it is the largest mass grave in the United States, yet there are no gravestones, and access is extremely limited. Her cup raises this cemetery's visibility and speaks to New York's indifference to the needs of the city's poorest people.

Where an investigation of silversmithing is concerned, one need look no further than Myra Mimlitsch-Gray, who has spent her career challenging the boundaries of this traditional craft and its role in society. Intrigued by the graceful forms of 18th-century armorial engravings found on tankards in the museum's collection, she boldly supersized the engraved lines and forged them on a large disc, including outsized curls of silver that mimic the wiry wisps that are created by the graver's burin.

Ted Muehling became intrigued by a Tiffany & Co. *Askos Pitcher* of 1873–78 in the museum's collection, its surface covered with a profusion of ferns and dogwood blossoms. Long a student of nature's subtle hand, he produced *Lichen Box, Small Sand Box* and *Large Sand Box,* each with repousséd lids. Two are studies of windswept beach sand set with worn quartz stones that fairly beg to be touched; the third is made in the shape of a plank of wood with large blossoming lichens.

The Tiffany pitcher inspired work by two other artists as well. Robert Lobe, who is well known for his large hammered aluminum sculptures, channeled the piece to different ends. His *Forest Moonlight* is a rugged wall piece in the shape of a giant rock face, with a branch made of fine silver, and a large fern at its tip.

The *pièce de résistance* of the exhibition could be considered the *Silversmith's Trophy* by Pratt Institute professor David Butler. With its scaled-down tools and a pithy quote from the late revered Washington University professor Heikki Seppä owwn the importance of making, Butler celebrates the countless unnamed metalsmiths who have worked for the great American silver firms, and the passion that continues to drive artists working today. Butler based his trophy on the museum's majestic Tiffany & Co. 1889

Ted Muehling
*Large Sand Box*, 2017
silver, quartz
1 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 7"

Myra Mimlitsch-Gray
*Magnification: Engraving*, 2017
silver
diameter 15 1/2"

LIKE MOST FUNCTIONAL OBJECTS,
HISTORICAL SILVER CARRIES
PLENTY OF CULTURAL BAGGAGE.



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yachting trophy known as the *Goelet Prize for Sloops*. This piece also inspired enamellist Amy Roper Lyons, whose rich *plique-à-jour* vessels have been growing in scale and complexity. The mermaids who seem to effortlessly support the historic trophy resonated with Lyons. She replaced the winsome, seaweed-covered mermaids in her piece with realistic figures of women who carry their burdens with dignity and grace. As with so many artists in the exhibition, who went the extra mile to achieve their vision, Lyons worked with figures for the first time in her career, creating them on computer, printing them in 3D, and casting them in silver.

The celebrated architecture of New York City provided an apt source for one work in the exhibition. Inspired by the tall, imposing lids of colonial casters, Wendy Yothers created a little city unto itself, with cubist forms that are the embodiment of New York in the Art Deco era and finials that emulate the Chrysler Building and other high points in the skyline.

At another end of the silver spectrum is the work of the design team Aranda/Lasch, composed of Benjamin Aranda, Christopher Lasch, and Joaquim Bonifaz, who are known for their improvisational, algorithmic approach to design. They joined with MIT whiz Marcelo Coelho to create flickering candlesticks using computer circuitry, which relies on silver for conductivity. Their *Silver Light* candlesticks blink in a programmed sequence and pay homage to the vital need for candlelight in the colonial world. Their solution combines a familiar type of modern technology with a traditional form to create something truly surprising and new.

"New York Silver, Then and Now" was the perfect opportunity to enjoy explorations in silver of some of today's best artists and designers, and also to appreciate the craftsmanship of the historical silver in the Museum of the City of New York's vast collection. The power of this precious material endures. ◆

*Jeannine Falino is an independent curator working in New York, and curator of* "New York Silver, Then and Now."

**1** "New York Silver, Then and Now" includes works from the following contemporary artists: Benjamin Aranda, Joaquín Bonifaz, and Chris Lasch of Aranda Lasch with Marcelo Coelho; Dror Benshetrit; Constantin Boym; Laurene Leon Boym; Sheila Bridges; David Butler; Erin Daily; Chitra Ganesh; Michael Gayk; William T. Georgis; Preston Jones; Amy Roper Lyons; Myra Mimlitsch Gray; Robert Lobe; Ted Muehling; Michele Oka Doner; Patrick Quinn; Kiki Smith; Courtney Starrett; Jonathan Wahl; Brian Weissman, and Wendy Yothers.

Aranda/Lasch
*Silver Light*, 2017
PET film, silver ink, silver epoxy, LEDs, with inkjet printing
height 11"

Amy Roper Lyons
*Women's Work*, 2017
silver, enamel
9 x 3 x 3"



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**Tiffany & Co.**
*Goelet Prize for Sloops,*
1889
silver, gilt
12 x 17 x 17"
Collection of Museum of the
City of New York

**David Butler**
*Silversmith's Trophy*, 2017
silver, iron, gold,
blue zircon, cocobolo wood
8 1/2 x 11 x 9"



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# MARTHA GLOWACKI

Right:
*Lacuna (mirror box illusion)*, 2016
cast iron, bronze, wood, mirrors, marbleized paper, animal bones, pigments
42 x 24 x 24”
Photo: Mike Rebholz

Opposite:
*Lacuna* (detail)

BY GLEN R. BROWN

# SCIENCE, ART, AND STYLE



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It is ironic that scientific instruments, engineered to precision for the pursuit of universals, should themselves be so idiosyncratic in design. These tools reflect the eras of their manufacture, not only in the materials incorporated into their construction and the kinds of mechanisms employed, but also through a less tangible quality that can only be called style. Science may seek an unbiased grasp of truth; while art, on the contrary, often celebrates the subjective. In the end neither can escape the influence of historical context, and consequently the embodiment of period style.

Having explored the illustrations and apparatuses of science from the Age of Enlightenment through the Victorian period, Martha Glowacki in her most recent work gravitates toward three principal themes: the early modern development of perspectival devices and illusions; 19th-century motion photography; and 18th-century botany. As she avidly engages in archival research in the history of science and scientific illustration, she has synthesized from historical sources and her own longstanding observation of the natural world works of art that inhabit an ambiguous space between objective reality and subjective fantasy. Like the beauty of a "chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table" famously offered by the Comte de Lautréamont, prophet of the Surrealists, as an example of subjective impression insinuating itself into the objects of a supposedly neutral world, the effect of Glowacki's works is to inflect the process of empirical observation and rational analysis of nature with ambiguity, even enigma.

Since the early 1960s, when Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* radically challenged the notion of science as a pure and independent field of enquiry, the influence that theoretical paradigms, as well as conceptual blind

Above:
*Perspective Box for Wenzel Jamnitzer*, 2012
wood, cast iron, bronze, inkjet prints, glass, silk
69 x 29 x 24 1/2"
Photo: Mike Rebholz

Opposite:
*Perspective Box for Wenzel Jamnitzer*, 2012
(detail of interior, looking through the peep hole)
Photo: Martha Glowacki



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spots and technological limitations, exercise over empiricism has become widely acknowledged. As evidence, one has only to think of the watercolor illustrations in John James Audubon's 1827 *Birds of America*. What struck the early 19th-century eye as the meticulous naturalism of a diligent ornithologist is today esteemed for its stylistic qualities, its reflection of a particular way of seeing that predates the invention of photography and draws heavily upon formal conventions of illustration of Audubon's day. The limitations were not simply technological. To Audubon, truth could be effectively captured through a certain kind of image-making that seemed to be an objective, entirely transparent method of representation. Today, the innocence of Audubon's empiricism elicits nostalgia, and we recognize a naiveté about the world and this mode of representing it. Such nostalgia is endemic to Glowacki's works as well, but it is a deliberate effect.

PERSPECTIVE IN A METAPHORICAL SENSE HAS BEEN A KEY THEME IN GLOWACKI'S WORK.

Perspective in a metaphorical sense has been a key theme in Glowacki's work, especially in a series of sculptures and installations exploring the history of early modern experimentation with visual perspective, and the mesmerizing illusions made possible by its manipulation. These works incorporate cabinet-like containers that vaguely descend from the Cabinets of Curiosities that Glowacki produced earlier in her career. *Perspective Box for Wenzel Jamnitzer* (2012), for example, consists of a beautifully grained wooden box, lid open, resting on a striped and tasseled runner that tops a volute-footed cast-iron drawing table from the early 20th century. Here the effect of period style arises not simply from the box's molding and scroll-cut skirt, or the drawing table, its single leg reminiscent of a classical column or the barrel of an 18th-century cast-iron cannon. In a more profound sense, the effect of period style arises from our understanding that such perfection of craftsmanship in woodworking and iron casting was once equated with precision of operation in technological devices and instruments of science.

The focus of Glowacki's apparatus is linear perspective, the Renaissance-developed pictorial strategy for creating the illusion of depth in two-dimensional images. Through a brass-fitted peephole in one side of the wooden box, viewers

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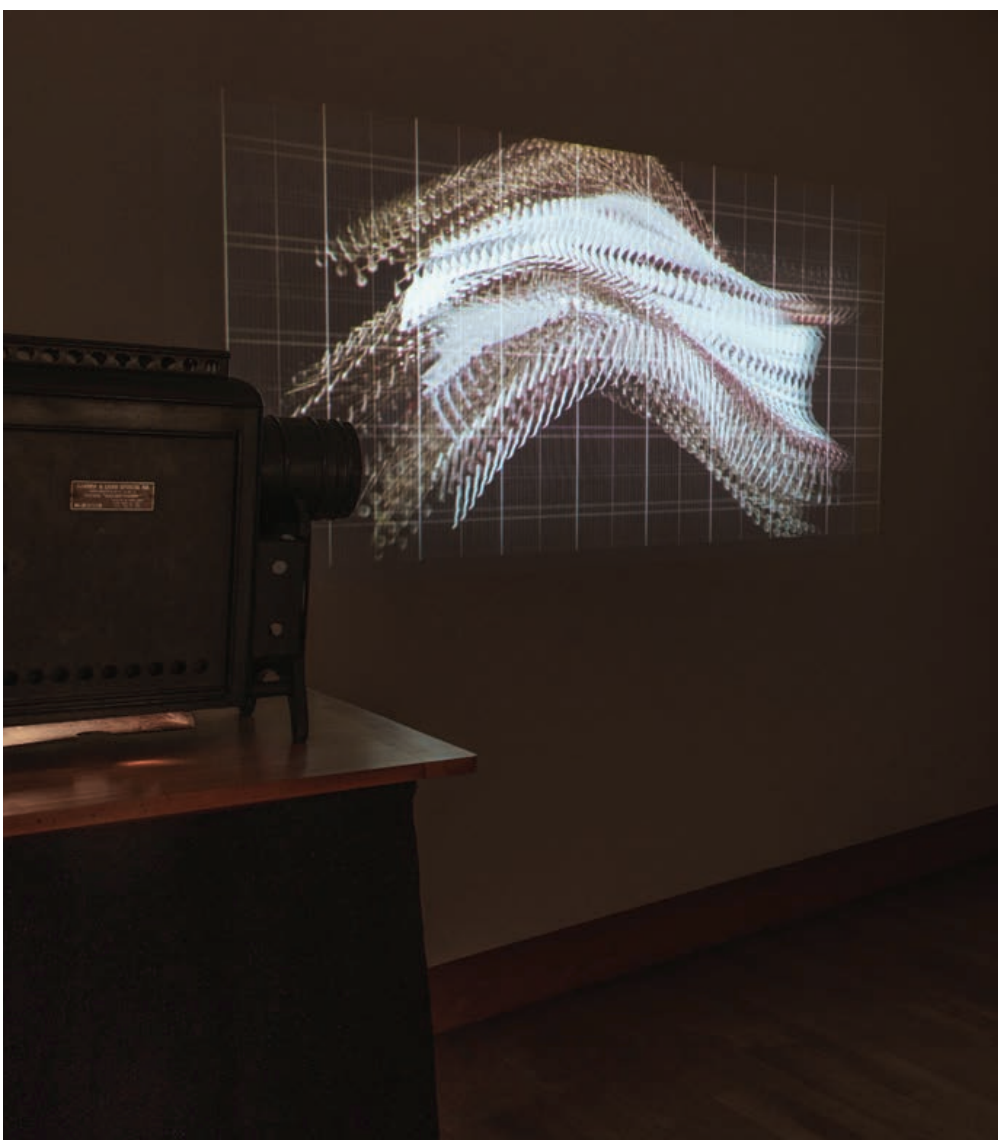
Below:
*Deconstructing Flight: An Homage to Étienne-Jules Marey*, 2017
(detail of cockatoo in harness with graphing machine)
Photo: Eric Tadsen

Below right:
*Deconstructing Flight: An Homage to Étienne-Jules Marey*, 2017
mixed media installation. dimensions variable.
(view of projection room, with two Balopticon projectors. Projections by Gregory Vershbow.)
Photo: Gregory Vershbow

glimpse a scene that, like the illusionary vista offered by Marcel Duchamp's *Étant donnés,* seems to possess a depth impossible for the box to contain. By means of a mirror that reflects a configuration of orthogonals drawn on the floor of the box and a perspectival image affixed to the wall through which the viewer's eye peers, a column-lined piazza seems to extend into the distance. Situated in both the real space and its reflected contingent are a cast-bronze cat's ball and a bronze hoop grasped by the hand of a detached doll's arm. In the strange, dreamlike confines of the work, these three-dimensional objects are reminiscent of the found toys of a Joseph Cornell shadowbox. But Glowacki was also inspired by 16th-century life castings of insects, crustaceans, fish, and reptiles by the German goldsmith Wenzel Jamnitzer, author of *Perspectiva Corporum Regularium,* a treatise on the perspectival representation of regular solids illustrated with the author's own engravings.

Glowacki acknowledges the parlor-entertainment use of perspectival illusions in the 18th and 19th centuries and the potential of her work to revive it. "I want people to be intrigued by these pieces, to interact with them and be surprised," she says. But *Perspective Box* is also a reminder of the degree to which linear perspective in art reflected a Renaissance pursuit of something like the "theory of everything." The 12th-century Fibonacci sequence and its manifestation in the ideal of the golden mean and, later, linear perspective, with its basis in geometry, were, after all, products of a concerted effort to uncover the secret order of the cosmos.

*Lacuna (mirror box illusion)* from 2016, another key work in Glowacki's series of perspectival-illusion sculptures, was





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influenced by early modern diagrams of mirror boxes. Composed of a hexagonal box lined with six sloping mirrors atop an elaborate Gothic-revival pedestal, the sculpture evolved from a salvaged Victorian aquarium. The addition of foliate finials and three fabricated cast-iron legs to match those of the original tripod base enhanced the appearance of a late-19th-century structure. Designed to perpetuate a miniature landscape into an infinity of reflections, the interior of the box plays mirrors against mirrors to exploit the refraction of light waves.

The objects within the box that absorb and scatter light suggest a small section of desert ground. Like the Site/Nonsite works of Robert Smithson, which also employed mirrors to visually augment extractions from the earth, and direct the mind to the voids that those extractions produced in real landscapes outside the gallery, *Lacuna* is, as its title implies, more about absence than presence. The physical elements of its landscape—sand, rocks, plant parts cast in bronze, dried skeletons of birds, and a hollow burl from which emanates a swarm of cast-bronze bees—are, through a surface of gray-scale paint, deliberately detached from their trompe l'oeil potential. The mirrors surrounding the landscape multiply its features exponentially in a realm of pure illusion, emphasizing distance, intangibility, and infinitude.

GLOWACKI ACKNOWLEDGES THE PARLOR ENTERTAINMENT USE OF PERSPECTIVAL ILLUSIONS IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES.

The illusionary projection of matter into space relates conceptually to the second theme inspiring Glowacki's recent work: attempts to capture the movement of matter through space in 19th-century experiments and motion photography. Her mixed-media *Deconstructing Flight: An Homage to Étienne-Jules Marey,* an ambitious two-room, multi-apparatus installation first mounted at the Chazen Museum at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2017, presents a quasi-documentary review of early scientific explorations of flight in birds. The installation includes a loose recreation of a scientific device created by the 19th-century French physiologist Étienne-Jules Marey to measure variations in air pressure during wing beats. Featuring a taxidermy specimen slung from a harness connected to a pressure-measuring mechanism and, through tubes and wires, a phonograph-like recording instrument below, the assemblage of faux early modern technology conjures Max Ernst's cockatoo alter ego caught within the strange and sinister machinery of Duchamp's *Large Glass.*

The second section of *Deconstructing Flight,* which includes projected photographs by artist Gregory Vershbow, features two antique overhead projectors that ostensibly display images taken by Marey's chronophotographic gun, a camera designed in 1882 to capture multiple phases of a moving subject. Vershbow's images feature a model wearing a jacket (displayed within the installation) to whose sleeves Glowacki



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has attached twin arrays of movable hinges and hammers salvaged from a piano. Reminiscent of the batwing structure of Leonardo da Vinci's famous sketches of flying machines (minus the webbing), this apparatus functions in the projected images like the "force-lines" of a Boccioni Futurist composition, marking the movement of the subject's arms through space.

Early modern botany is yet another aspect of the history of science to influence Glowacki's recent work, in particular the 18th-century treatises by Stephen Hales and Charles Bonnet in the special collections of Memorial Library at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. *Growing Towards the Light,* an installation consisting of three Georgian-style tables (actually early 20th-century steel products of the Simmons company) topped with apparent in-progress experiments, repeats with plant protagonists the plight of the cockatoo in *Deconstructing Flight*. Nature is subjected to confinement and analysis for the benefit of science. On one table, flowers on erratic stems emerge from a wooden box, bending heliotropically toward the resource that they have been strategically denied, while a nearby pair of shears manifests a threat to their independence. On another table, a hapless flower is caught like a fish on a line by a ratcheting device poised to raise it from its

EARLY MODERN BOTANY IS YET ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE TO INFLUENCE GLOWACKI'S RECENT WORK.

*Growing Towards the Light*, 2015-16
found metal tables and chairs, steel, bronze, cast iron, wood, pigments, inkjet prints
dimensions variable
Photo: Eric Tadsen

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*The Psychology of Plants,* 2015 (part 1)
wood, cast and fabricated bronze, glass, tintype, pigments
23 x 17 x 3"
Photo: Mike Rebholz

*The Psychology of Plants,* 2015 (part 4)
wood, cast and fabricated bronze, glass, tintype, pigments
23 x 17 x 3"
Photo: Mike Rebholz

drooping state. On a third table, the foliate branch of a pruned trunk is trapped within a metal cage. It is a reinterpretation of the glass capsule employed in an actual 18th-century experiment, but eerily evocative of an iron maiden.

While the viewer's empathy with the plants in *Growing Towards the Light* might lend the work sinister connotations, the domestic tables and chairs evoke an airy, sunlit Georgian study rather than the dark lab of a sadistic scientist. This, too, could be interpreted as stylistically nostalgic, recalling Edward Hicks's many paintings of *The Peaceable Kingdom,* with their early American optimism about the relationship between Pennsylvania colonists, native inhabitants, and nature itself. Glowacki's *Growing Towards the Light* conveys an early industrial-age innocence about nature as a boundless and bountiful resource ripe for harnessing by the human will; a spirit of manifest destiny, before science and technology became the allies of unprecedented death in the world wars and ecological crises of the 20th century.

The urge to resolve the fundamental relationship between human beings and the plant world with respect to such factors as soul or spirit is a controversy revived in Glowacki's *The Psychology of Plants* (2015) and its reference to Julien Offray de la Mettrie's 1748 treatise *L'Homme Plante.* The arrangement of Glowacki's mixed-media plant specimens in oval portrait frames of the sort that once circumscribed the painted heads of 18th-century family members hints at de la Mettrie's manner of verbally personifying plants. Cartellinos pinned within the compositions carry such formerly contentious statements as "plants have no soul."

The tendency to be drawn in by the fascinating, sometimes surreal, effects of Glowacki's revivals of scientific period style should not distract the viewer from recognizing her own place in the history of art. Glowacki's contributions to the field over her career have helped shape contemporary practice. While she considers herself a sculptor, she draws heavily on her background in metalsmithing and retains a strong appreciation for craft. She has simply recognized new ways in which craft processes can be applied. "When I was a graduate student in the 1970s," she remembers, "there was a generation of young metalsmiths who wanted to work in a more sculptural fashion. There was some pushback against that. What I'm doing now would not have been considered metalsmithing." The same, of course, could be said of the means and modes of representation in science that make possible our contemporary conception of the natural world. ◆

*Glen R. Brown is a professor of art history and the Art Department Director of Graduate Studies at Kansas State University.*



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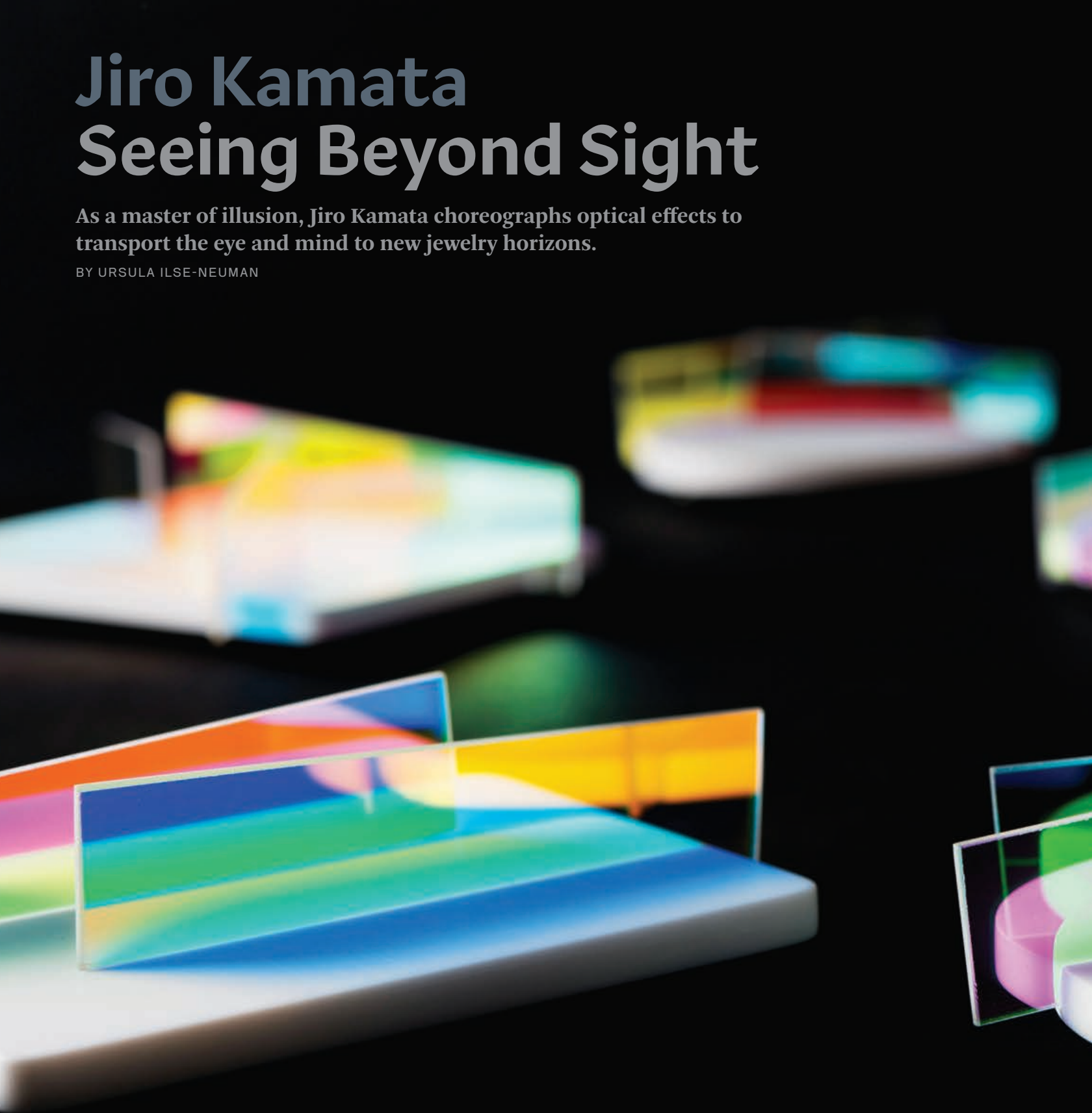
# Jiro Kamata
# Seeing Beyond Sight

**As a master of illusion, Jiro Kamata choreographs optical effects to transport the eye and mind to new jewelry horizons.**

BY URSULA ILSE-NEUMAN



*Palette* (brooch), 2015
dichroic mirror, Corian, silver
3 1/2 x 2 3/8 x 3/4"
Photo: Jiro Kamata

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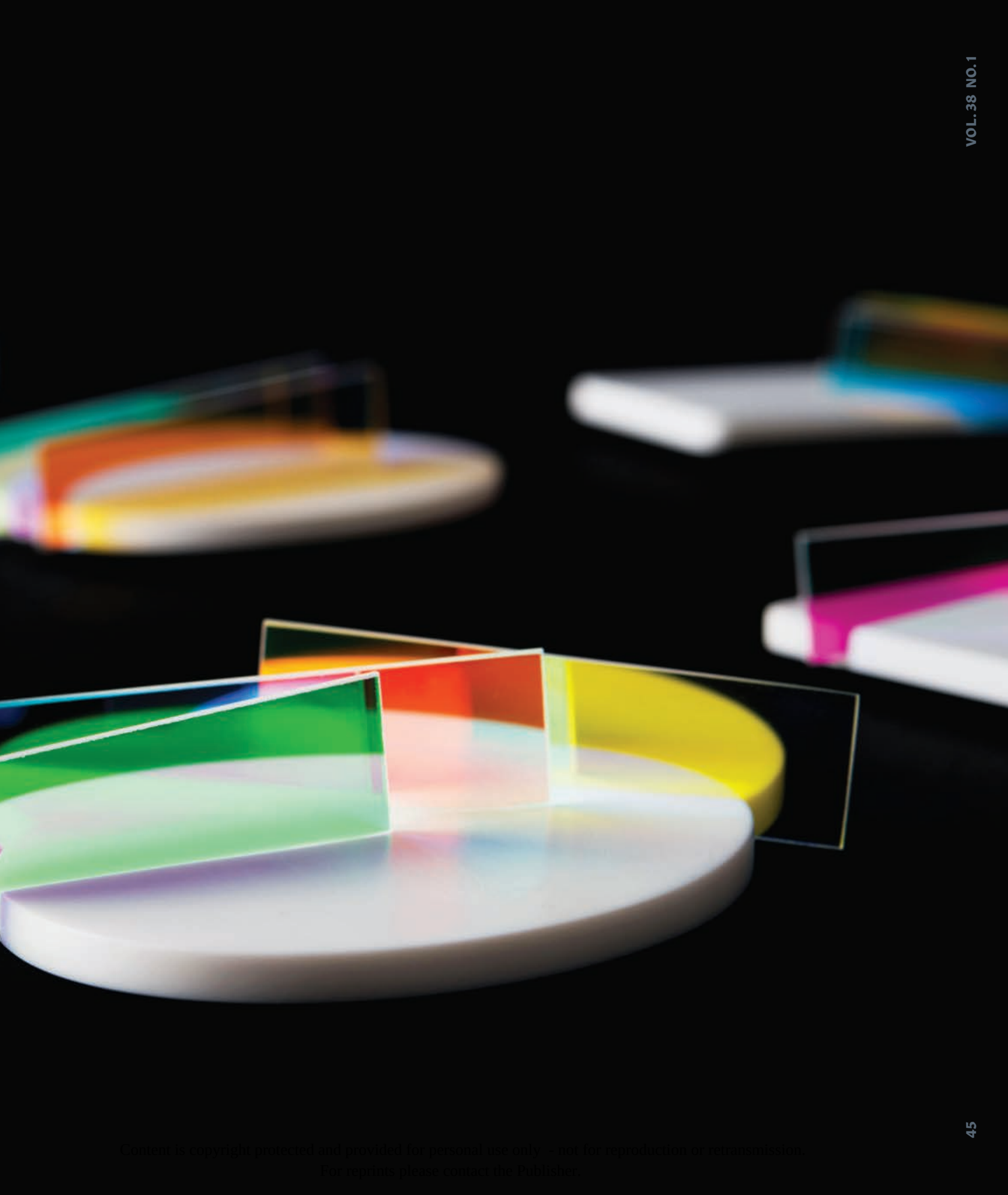





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Above:
*Target* (pendant), 2003
silver,
nylon string
diameter 2 1/8"
Photo: Jiro Kamata

Opposite:
*Extrovert* (installation), 2006
pendant: high-polished aluminum, nylon string
pendant diameter 3 1/8"
Photo: Jiro Kamata

*Tesa Rings*, 1999
cello tape, kisses with lipstick,
silver,
fine gold plated
diameter 1"
Photo: Jiro Kamata

Perception and illusion have been artist Jiro Kamata's preoccupations for nearly 20 years. As a student in Pforzheim, Germany, in 1999, he became fascinated with the glowing quality of the rings he had conjured by using his own lips to apply lipstick to cellophane tape. His *Tesa Rings* remain fresh and compelling today, even though the magician long ago revealed the sleight of hand that went into their construction.

Four years later, still a graduate student at the Munich Academy, Kamata made another breakthrough with his "Target" series (2003); a pendant that features silver crosshairs within a circular blackened silver housing, essentially suggesting that the wearer of the piece is being viewed through the eyes of a sniper. It was Kamata's first attempt to "see" by means of his material, and the series can now be understood as a precursor of the artist's ongoing use of optical and reflective elements in his work. Taking a broad view of Kamata's evolving career over two decades, themes of reality and illusion recur in highly inventive jewelry series that couple immediate visual excitement with deeper inquiries into perception and introspection. Proudly proclaiming himself to be a goldsmith first and foremost, this artist dazzles viewers through his technical mastery of materials without using gold or gemstones.

Kamata was born in 1978, in Hirosaki, Japan, and while he is completely at ease working in his sunny studio on a quiet street in Munich, the path he took from his childhood home could not have been anticipated. To fulfill his father's dream that he enter the family jewelry business, Kamata spent two years at the Yamanashi Institute of Gemology and Jewelry Art (1996–98) before leaving to study goldsmithing and stonecutting in Germany. After studying with renowned jewelers Rudolf Bott, Johanna Dahm, and Wolfgang Lieglein at the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Pforzheim (1998–99), he ultimately told his father that he would remain in Germany. That decision became irrevocable after five-and-a-half years of study in the stimulating atmosphere created by Otto Künzli at the Munich Academy, followed by six-and-a-half years as Künzli's artistic assistant.

It was time well spent. For his thesis project at the Munich Academy, Kamata placed a highly polished aluminum sphere within each of five differently patterned aluminum "cages" that he conceived as jewelry boxes. Under ambient light, the linear patterns of the enclosures appeared on the shiny surfaces of the pendants, producing an effect suggestive of the internal sparkle of gemstones; thus the title *Extrovert* for the installation. It was pure Kamata in both its simplicity and complexity: an intriguing and challenging projection of non-Euclidean patterns and distortions on the spherical pendants.

Kamata has become an important member of the European art jewelry community, and he does not attribute any direct Japanese influences to his work. He does acknowledge, however, that Japanese thought and culture strongly, albeit subconsciously, shape his work. He references the Japanese multifaceted concept of *su* (素), a single Kanji symbol richly endowed with multiple English



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**Kamata believes that everything that has passed through the lenses can conjure rich associations of time, light, history, spirit, and mortality.**

translations, all relating to the beauty of the original and simple or, as Kamata puts it, "It is beautiful as it is."[1]

Kamata's ability to create compelling and (literally) eye-catching jewelry from an economy of means began with his use of precision lenses extracted from discarded cameras, which became central elements for the necklaces and brooches in his "Momentopia" series (2008–10), the body of work that established his international reputation. Kamata believes that everything that has passed through the lenses can conjure rich associations of time, light, history, spirit, and mortality. Yet, in what would seem to be an antithetical approach, he painted the backs of camera lenses black, and (almost as if by magic) brought the untouched convex surfaces alive with myriad colors and unexpected reflected images of the viewer and the surroundings.[2] As his mentor, Künzli mused: "What riches has this lens already seen? All the images of this world appear, start moving, become a film, merge, mutate into dreams of the night."[3]

The artist's "Spiegel" (German for mirror) series (2011–13) was an outgrowth of the "Momentopia" series. Here Kamata coupled unpainted camera lenses and mirrors in black housings in order to draw the viewer into disorienting architectonic spaces. Far from simply recycling items to be used as jewelry, Kamata once again elevated the mundane into the transcendent world of ideas, and in so doing provided an apt metaphor for his evolution as an artist.

Given Kamata's extraordinarily developed visual sense, his immediate and intense reactions to unfamiliar surroundings figure directly in his work, taking form through the materials that are his true starting point. The inspiration for the "Arboresque" series (2010–12) was his exposure to Mexico's deep blue sky and the pulsating greens, yellows, and



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*Spiegel* (necklace), 2013
camera lenses, stainless steel, silver
length 19 5/8"
Photo: Jiro Kamata

Opposite:
*Momentopia* (necklace), 2008
camera lenses, lacquer, silver
length 19 5/8"
Photo: Jiro Kamata

*Arboresque* (brooch), 2010
camera lens, acrylic paint, silver
4 x 2 3/8 x 5/8"
Photo: Jiro Kamata

**The illusive images captured in the reflections and interactions of Kamata's jewelry components further express the Japanese predilection for finding transient beauty in the physical world.**

deep purples of its bustling cities. Turning to camera lenses once again, he covered their reflective surfaces with acrylic paint, and then used the ancient Japanese *suminagashi* ("ink-floating") technique of painting on water to add sinuous, flowing arabesque shapes inspired by Mexico's colonial architecture.

A spectacular sunset and a rising full moon coinciding over Chile's Atacama Desert stirred Kamata to simulate those visual contrasts in his "BI" series (2013–14). He found the solution in industrial dichroic mirrors, which spectrally separate light by reflecting one color (wavelength) while transmitting the complementary color, without absorbing any light that would diminish the intensity. Unlike conventional mirrors or polished lenses, dichroic mirrors do not reflect the actual surroundings; rather, they emit diffused polychromatic colors that change with moving lines of sight. Some of the visual effects result from the fact that when the mirror is tilted, the angle of the light penetrating the dichroic layers changes the colors dramatically, an effect nearly impossible to capture in static photographs.

In the "BI" series, Kamata also used interacting layers of glass and foil to create lively but random patterns akin to the "bokeh" effect photographers are able to produce through intentionally out-of-focus photographic images. (The term *bokeh* derives from Japanese "*boke,*" or haze). Kamata not only accepts but takes advantage of the optical characteristics of dichroic mirrors, much as photographers generate the blurry bokeh effect by exploiting "shortcomings" in the photographic process. Capitalizing on the visual consequences that emerge from the innate qualities of chosen materials is inherent to the Japanese concept of *wabi-sabi*, which involves embracing the beauty in the imperfect, the impermanent, and the incomplete. The



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This page:
*BI Brooch*, 2014
dichroic mirror, foil, silver
diameter 2 1/8"

Opposite:
*BI Necklace*, 2014
dichroic mirror, silver
length 17 3/4"

illusive images captured in the reflections and interactions of Kamata's jewelry components, further express the Japanese predilection for finding transient beauty in the physical world.

Kamata's exploration of the potential of dichroic mirrors continued in his 2015 "Palette" series, with the unexpected use of Corian,[4] a featureless acrylic polymer. Finding a suitable material is not a mere academic exercise for Kamata; justifying its transformation into jewelry demands a thorough understanding of its properties and an intimate connection with it. Kamata's goal is to create an object that reflects the beauty inherent in the material; in other words, to create a pure manifestation of *wabi-sabi* thought.[5]

In the "Palette" series, rectangular dichroic mirrors, often multilayered, are mounted vertically on flat Corian bases, giving the dichroic glass an insubstantial or floating quality and creating diaphanous color effects that fill the space with light while leaving voids between the mirrors. This Zen-like visualization of existence and emptiness recalls the space between stars and galaxies. When worn or placed on display, the shapes and their ensuing shadows change, depending on the direction of the light source to which the brooch is exposed. To Kamata, light is a living thing that moves and changes color as it ebbs and flows. In this regard, his "Palette" pieces display a marked affinity with James Turrell's sculptures and architectural installations, in which light becomes a discrete, physical object.

The third generation of Kamata's works made with dichroic mirrors is his "Border" series (2015–16), in which the artist exploits the dramatically sharp color flips of dichroic mirrors when they overlap white Corian borders. Introduced in 2015, this series displays yet another unusual property of the mirrors that works to Kamata's advantage: the ability to produce striking residual reflections from the back side of the mirror onto the Corian substrate. Says Kamata, "A border is the line between something and something… in corporal dialogue with its environment." Once again, in accord with the Japanese philosophy of seeing beauty in the imperfect and the unconventional, Kamata achieves arresting effects by welcoming the residual elements that engineers normally identify as flaws.

While reflective surfaces are an important recurring theme, conventional mirrors are the central elements in Kamata's most recent work, the "Ghost" series, and they relate even more closely to his Japanese upbringing. As a child Kamata often accompanied his parents to the shrine in his hometown to observe important religious occasions. According to Shinto tradition, God gave the Emperor three gifts at the birth of Japan: a sword, a small stone or pendant, and a mirror. All Shinto shrines contain mirrors because of their ability to fully reflect everything around them, symbolic reminders that the presence of God is everywhere.

A more recent impetus for his "Ghost" series was the mirror mosaics of the Golden Temple in Bangkok, Thailand, which Kamata visited in 2016, and where he found his own highly fragmented reflection to be both confusing and spiritual. Understanding immediately that his response was related to his childhood visits to the Shinto shrine and to Shintoism's association with ghosts, demons, and spirits inspired Kamata to glue thin front surface mirrors[7] together to be presented on large mirrors when not worn. The ghostly result is that the jewelry disappears against the mirror except for a distortion in the field of vision. Kamata associates this effect with contemporary scientific experiments in optical camouflage, the mind-bending results of which have been prominently featured in such science fiction movies as *Ghost in the Shell* (2017).[8] The noted jeweler Peter Skubic describes mirrors in his 2016 exhibition "Mirrors Are Invisible" as "reversed simulators of reality that open a Pandora's box of interpretations that signify [for him] the negation of reality."[9] The sculptor Anish Kapoor speaks of his mirrors as "non-objects"—indicating that their presence is not contained in their material surfaces.[10]

Even though the jewelry object in *Ghost* becomes visible when seen from the side, when the "trick" is revealed, the allure of the illusion remains. (Ironically, by placing the reflecting aluminum on the front surface, Kamata eliminates the secondary reflection, commonly known as "ghosting," in conventional mirrors.) Such "invisible" brooches metaphorically represent both the superficial self-image and a portrait of the person beneath the surface.

Kamata's jewelry is technically inventive and dazzling. It is the philosophical underpinnings of his creations, however, that sustain our interest. The thrill of seeing the "Ghost" brooches disappear on a hanging mirror almost supersedes the



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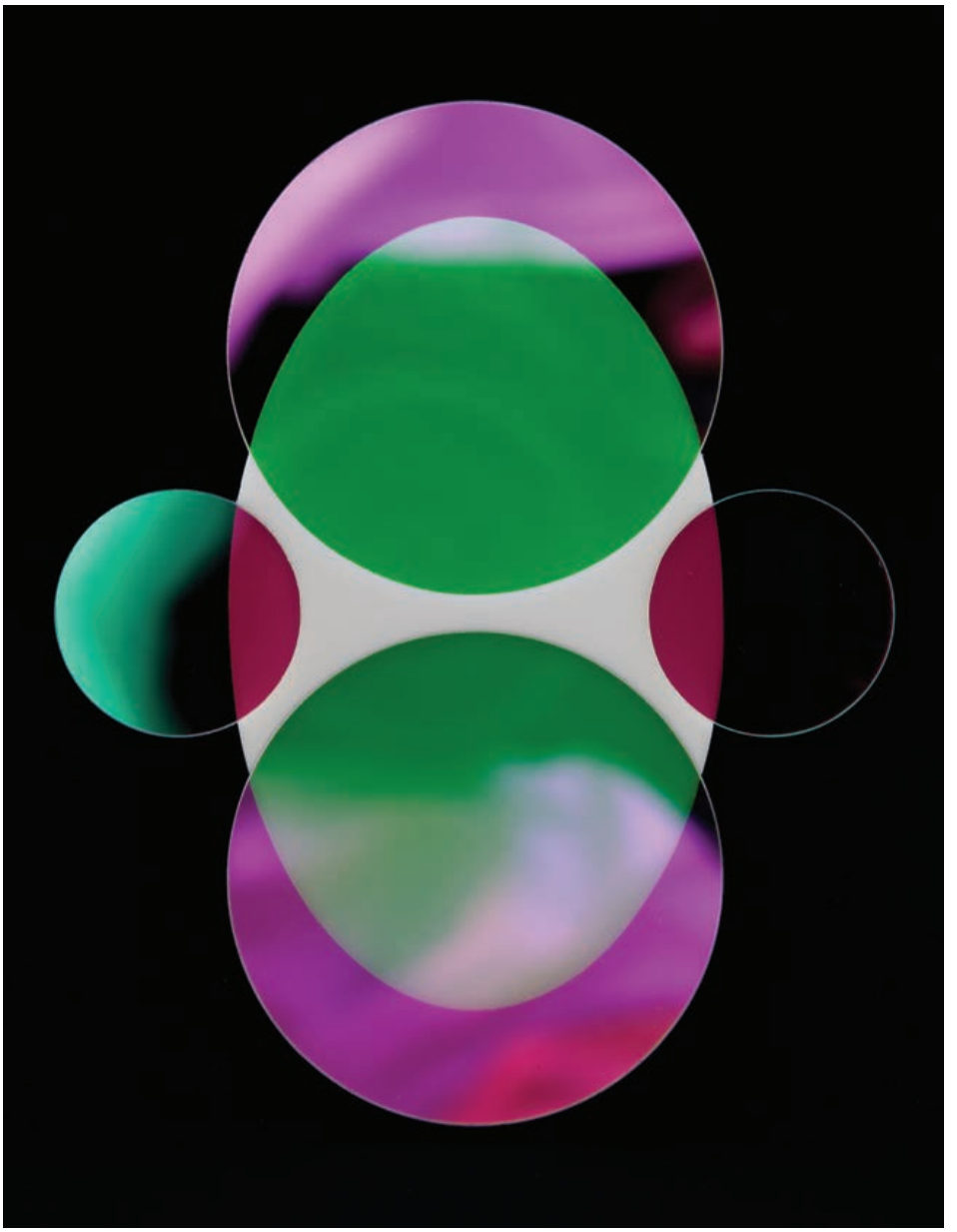

*Border* (brooch), 2015
dichroic mirror, corian, silver
4 3/8 x 2 3/4 x 3/8"
Photo: Jiro Kamata

Opposite:
*Ghost* (wall piece/brooch), 2016
mirror, quartz coating, silver mirror size
23 5/8 x 15 3/4"
Photo: Jiro Kamata

actual wearing of the brooch. One cannot help but speculate that Kamata might eventually turn more of his attention to sculpture or installation art, which he began to explore years ago in his *Extrovert* thesis installation. Kamata, however, is reluctant to discuss his current work, other than to say that he is now experimenting with mother of pearl. This is the first time that he has chosen to work with a natural material, let alone one so closely associated with jewelry traditions. The technical challenge he is up against is applying a mirror coating to the iridescent multi-hued surface. Kamata finds promise in this latest experiment because he can see clear mirror-like reflections from one direction, but a fractured pearl effect through the mirror coating when viewing it from another direction—just the kind of visual tour de force that intrigues him. ◆

*Ursula Ilse-Neuman is Curator Emerita at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York.*

**1** Personal communication with the artist, August 2017. / **2** The transformation of lenses into new forms recalls the work of the Japanese artist Noriyuki Haraguchi, whose work centered on rendering familiar industrial substances into new sculptural forms. / **3** Otto Künzli, *Three Worlds*, a review of the exhibition Momentopia: Jiro Kamata, 10 Apr 2008–03 May 2008, in Klimt02 online at https://klimt02.net/hannahgallery/exhibitions/momentopia-jiro-kamata-klimt02-gallery. / **4** Corian is the brand name for a solid surface material created by E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company (DuPont) in 1967. / **5** Personal communication with the artist, March 2017. / **6** Artist's statement as quoted in Klimt02 exhibition notes for Border by Jiro Kamata, 02 Dec 2015–15 Jan 2016, https://klimt02.net/events/exhibitions/border-jiro-kamata-klimt02-gallery. / **7** A front or first surface mirror has the reflective surface on top of the pane of glass, as opposed to the conventional, second surface mirrors where light has to pass through the glass before being reflected back. / **8** The movie *Ghost in the Shell* is based on the Japanese manga of the same name by Masamune Shirow. / **9** As quoted in the December 13, 2016, interview "After the Big Bang" by Tanel Veenre, in https://artjewelryforum.org/skubic-after-the-big-bang. / **10** Michael Gutierrez, "The Non-Objects of Anish Kapoor's Fancy," *The Philosophers' Magazine*, 78, no. 3 2017: 44–52 (https://www.pdcnet.org/collection/show?id=tpm_2017_0078_0044_0052&file_type=pdf).



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# Medusa: Jewellery and Taboos

Musée d'Art Moderne
de la Ville de Paris
5.19.17 – 11.5.17

*by Liesbeth den Besten*

Installation view of the "Medusa: Jewellery and Taboos" exhibition. Photo: Pierre Antoine

A visit to "Medusa: Jewellery and Taboos" proves to be long and involving, but worth every minute. The exhibition covers the entire first floor of the Modern Art Museum of Paris. As the museum is not used to organizing jewelry exhibitions, curator Anne Dressen invited two experts, jewelry historian and gemologist Michèle Heuzé and art historian and jewelry artist Ben Lignel, to collaborate on this project. The bulk of the more than 400 pieces on show are loans from private and public collections. Dressen's aim was to establish a new appreciation for jewelry. The exhibition has four underlying themes: identity, value, the body, and ritual. Sixteen subthemes and accompanying wall texts present a multilayered story.

"Medusa" brings together jewelry from many different genres that are generally seen, sold, studied, and appreciated on their own: ancient, historical, fashion, ethnological, and fetish objects, as well fine and art jewelry. Some 20 fine art works that in an implicit way deal with jewelry and the themes in the exhibition are also on view. French artist Clément Rodzielski converts jewelry shop bust displays into sculptures with decorative paintings on the side of the (beheaded) neck. Yoko Ono's early conceptual text *Central Park Pond Piece. Go to the middle of the Central Park Pond and drop all your jewelry' (dated: 1956 autumn)* calls for a dematerialization of jewelry. While Mike Kelley's *Memory Ware Flat #17* (2001) is covered with jewelry, chains, beads, badges, and the like, the title indicates the work is part of a larger series on memories and folk art. Presenting the contemporary art as a complement to the jewelry seemed a brave if rather peculiar attempt to turn (art historical) conventions upside down, proving how context influences the objects and even precludes other readings.

Each room had a different theme and installation mode; the illumination varied from diffuse to bright. Jewelry is presented in table showcases, cabinets, and wall showcases, as well as on mannequins. The custom mounts provided throughout are proof of the curatorial team's careful consideration. In each room, one wall is used to display two-dimensional work made by jewelry and fine artists, and additional information (magazine articles or newspaper photos), while an opposite wall is used for texts and large indexes, with the objects listed by number.

The thematic approach leaves traditional classification behind. For jewelry lovers, this approach works quite well; they will appreciate Coco Chanel's exquisite white gold and diamond open-front necklace *Étoile Filante* (a re-interpretation of her Comète necklace of 1932) beside Torun's silver and quartz open-front necklace *Body Sculpture* (1951–58), wearable both on the back and the front. David

**Meret Oppenheim,** *Bracelet*, 1935. fur, metal. 2 3/4 x 2". Co Fleiss collection, Paris. © Meret Oppenheim © ADAGP.





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Bielander's *Python* is next to a bejeweled Cartier *Serpent* necklace (1958); both relate to a theme that goes back to antiquity. Paul Derrez's erotic pendant on a chain, *Face* (1994), sheds a new light on Lucio Fontana's golden bracelet *Egg* (1968), which is placed beside it. Cartier's golden nail bracelet Clou (1971) looks like a stylish prelude to the punk design of Vivienne Westwood's *Black Leather Cuff*. Manon van Kouswijk's pink porcelain necklace *Pearls for Girls* (2012) and the men's chain of the order of Saint-Simon (1833) both in their own way employ jewelry as a sign of sexual and political liberty. (And these are just some examples from the first room!)

The exhibition curators managed to find pieces that most people only know from images in books or on the Internet, such as the Cartier *Draperie* necklace that once graced the neck of the duchess of Windsor (1947), set with the most exquisite gems; a color photo from 1953 of the piece 'in situ' decorates the wall. The intensive curatorial research probed objects, jewelry houses, history, artists, goldsmiths, and designers, revealing stories that are relatively unknown.

The mingling of genres, time periods, and cultures is liberating, but the downside of this egalitarian method is that the visitor loses track of characteristic movements in jewelry that have their own history, markets, and

**House of Cartier,** *Snake Necklace*, 1968 (special order for Maria Félix). platinum, white gold, diamond, pear-shaped emeralds, enamel. 22 1/2". Cartier Collection. Photo: Nick Welsh

Installation view of the "Medusa: Jewellery and Taboos" exhibition. Photo: Pierre Antoine



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discourse. As such, the exhibition gives no clue to the future of art jewelry. The wall texts allude to values and counter values. Yet a sentence that begins with 'Studio jewellery, contemporary jewellery (aka author jewellery) as well as costume jewellery...' will make the average visitor feel dizzy.

In my view, it is not by coincidence that this exhibition is in Paris. Although it is not known as a center of contemporary jewelry, Paris has a rich jewelry history (art nouveau, fashion, fine jewelry), and was a center of surrealism, which inspired experimental jewelry by artists such as Man Ray and Meret Oppenheim. Among the *paruriers* (fashion jewelry designers) were adventurous and bold designers such as Elsa Triolet and Robert Goosens. And in the 1950s, famous artists such as Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst, and Alberto Giacometti designed jewelry that was fabricated by Paris goldsmith François Hugo. Art jewelry is a relatively young discipline that started fighting for its own identity since the 1960s but in France some decades later.

In art jewelry, the focus on breaking conventional rules eventually led to navel-gazing and obscurity. Today, jewelry artists seem to be more interested in establishing a connection with other sorts of jewelry, and with history. This is therefore the right exhibition, at the right time, and in the right place. For further study, the lavishly illustrated catalogue includes a complete checklist of works in the exhibition, and exhaustive lists of institutions, galleries, jewelry houses, and brands.

*Liesbeth den Besten is an independent art historian based in Amsterdam who works as a writer, critic, lecturer and teacher.*

# Touchy Feely

Baltimore
Jewelry Center
4.14.17 - 6.2.17

*by Katja Toporski*

Jewelry's small scale and proximity to the body offers an intimate invitation to both wearer and viewer to touch and hold it; haptic qualities the exhibition "Touchy Feely" set out to investigate. A group show featuring a total of 37 pieces by 26 national and international artists, participation was part invitational and part selection from an entry call. The result was a refreshing encounter with work by well-known artists and those less so.

In light of the current abundance of online images, this show offered an important perspective on the perception of jewelry "in the flesh." A seamless white background may mislead the viewer regarding a jewel's scale and weight, while the setting of plain white gallery walls actually helps those become apparent. The three intertwined hollow pendants in slightly varying hues of *Embrace 1-3* by Nathalie Maiello come to life on the wall, but only touch reveals the pleasant but predictable smooth surface of powdercoated brass.

Many of the pieces in the show are visually deceptive, such as the brooch *Midnight Eden* by Jeffrey Lloyd Dever. It features a burst of black flowers that feel soft and delicate to the touch, surprising those who may have expected jagged metal blades. The exhibition map notes that these forms are made from reclaimed

**Nathalie Maiello,** *Embrace 1-3*, 2016. copper, brass, powdercoat, silk thread.





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**Jeffrey Lloyd Dever,** *Midnight Eden*, 2013. reclaimed bicycle tubes, 4 1/2 x 2 1/2 x 1 1/4". Photo: Gregory R. Staley

# Abstract Design in Asian Jewels

Susan Ollemans Oriental Art, Asia Week 2017, New York City 3.9.17 – 3.18.17

*by Andrea DiNoto*

During New York's annual spring art fair madness, Asia Week stands out for its many rare and exotic offerings, from ancient to modern. Dealers, both local and from around the world, present artworks in every form and medium, including rare stone carvings, major bronzes, important ceramics—and of course, jewelry. I look forward every year to whatever dazzling, intriguing, and fascinating pieces the British dealer Sue Ollemans has discovered in her travels through China, India, and Southeast Asia. Ollemans, a sinologist who has been collecting since 1979, usually features torques, earrings, pendants, rings and more that date anywhere from the Bronze Age to the 20th century. Stylistically, this jewelry ranges from the stark simplicity of an ancient Vietnamese glass earring to the richly elaborated and bejeweled ornaments of India's Moghul period.

This year, Ollemans chose to display a number of pieces notable for their timeless abstract, or geometric, designs. The iridescent glass bicycle tubes, adding another dimension to the narrative. *Saggy Blue* and *Pink Beanis*, two brooches by Tyler Stoll, suggest the opposite assumption. A light-gray sausage shape presses against a pastel-colored metal enclosure; its undulating organic form implies softness, while touch reveals a cool, smooth concrete surface.

Some of the works directly address the sense of touch, such as Mallory Weston's two "Barrel Cactus" brooches. They appear prickly to the eye, but closer inspection reveals individual panels that are stitched together with thread, leaving one wondering if the piece might be made of leather. However, picking up the brooches discloses the true nature of those spines, when their metallic tips uncomfortably poke the skin.

The *Crayon* necklace by Fern Robinson features a pendant that is part red crayon, part resin-encased crayon shavings. Here the tactile experience is superseded by an invitation to play, which in this case would also alter the shape of the piece.

While artists employed all manner of materials, a large number of pieces were made predominantly from silicone. Some merely espoused its aesthetic qualities, while it lent conceptual support in others. *Flesh Gem Collar* by Jill Baker Gower is a double-stranded necklace of oversized skin-toned silicone gems, with small white pearls as accent points on their culets. Their nipple-like appearance and the fleshy feel of silicone in the guise of faceted gems appears to blur the line between body and adornment. Silicone evokes associations of skin, flesh, and cosmetic implants, and thus has a role to play in an exhibition dedicated to touch. Unfortunately, similarly strong tactile experiences but with different materials such as fabric, leather, or fur were missing from the show.

Each piece was displayed openly and coded to invite the viewer to either touch or hold it by the type of hook it was suspended from. This exhibition certainly succeeded in drawing our attention to the inherently multisensory experience of jewelry, making an important case for showing jewelry in actual spaces, and for allowing visitors to physically interact with the work.

*Katja Toporski is a Washington, D.C.–based jeweler, educator, and writer.*



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South Indian, *Ear Ornaments (Thandatti)*, 19th century, gold, 1 1/2 x 1 1/2"

earring from Vietnam's Dong Son culture (700 BCE–700 CE) is remarkable for its purity of form: an open circle cut with a single narrow slit so it could be slipped onto an elongated ear lobe, a convention in many ancient cultures. Measuring around three inches in diameter, it could easily be adapted as a pendant for contemporary use.

Many of Ollemans's pendants and torques are instantly wearable, with little adaptation needed. Ceremonial double axe pendants, from Indonesia's Central Flores and Central Sulawesi regions, are made from a single piece of sheet gold or bronze bent to form a double fan shape with a loop. In rituals, these are worn suspended or sewn to a cloth head cover. Although Ollemans's examples date from the 19th and early 20th centuries, such Javanese forms were made as early as the 4th through 6th centuries. Silver torques are perhaps the most ageless of all metal jewelry forms, and Ollemans offers several elegant examples from the Golden Triangle in Thailand. One bears graceful swanhead finials; another, with birdhead finials, was worn, says Ollemans, by people of Chinese origin. Less easily wearable but stunningly beautiful as objects are the pleated golden ear pieces from the Southern Nias, in the Indonesian archipelago. As Ollemans explains, the gold was hammered into thin delicate ribbed sheets, then given a curved shape—possibly fernlike—signifying vitality and fertility.

As with much of ancient jewelry and precious objects (for instance, a 17th-century Mughal kohl bottle of carved jade inset with rubies), form is often symbolic and tied to nature, myth, and ritual use. The kohl bottle, for example, is in the familiar paisley teardrop shape thought to resemble a mango. In line with her "abstract design" theme, Ollemans displayed two pair of 19th-century ear ornaments from South India, both complex geometric assemblages of three-dimensional golden cubes, balls, and stylized natural forms arranged as what can only be called constructivist sculptures. Traditionally worn, then as now, by women, these earrings hung from elongated lobes and rested on the shoulders, which took the weight. However, says Ollemans, "They are not as heavy as they look, as the forms are made of sheet gold filled with lac." The design of the pair is called *thandatti*, from a particular region of Tamil Nadu, India, and may represent the three Hindu worlds of belief: the physical universe; the astral plane; and the spiritual universe of the Hindu gods.

Like many examples of contemporary art jewelry, these fantastic pieces could as easily be worn or simply appreciated as art objects. In any case, one thing's for sure: the tribal creators of these and other fascinating pieces from Ollemans's collections were in no way thinking of jewelry as mere frivolous adornment. For them, jewelry was made to carry information as to rank, wealth, and magic. As Ollemans insists, and constantly proves in her Asia Week shows, "This is just not a minor art!"

*Andrea DiNoto is a New York–based writer on art, craft and design.*

South Indian/Indonesian, *Marangga*, 19th century, bronze, 8 1/4 x 8 1/4"





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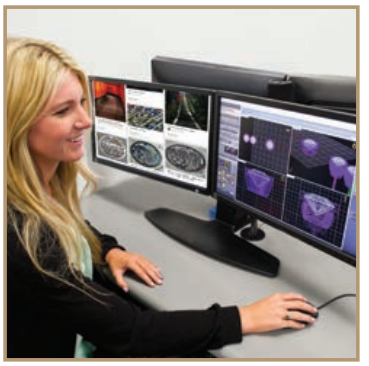

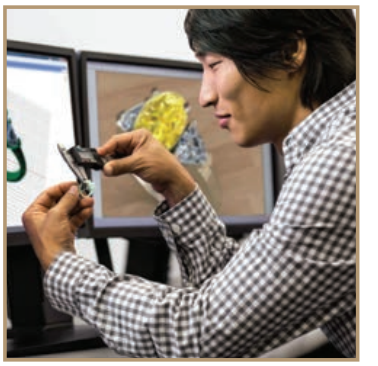

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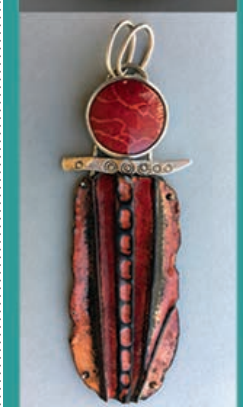

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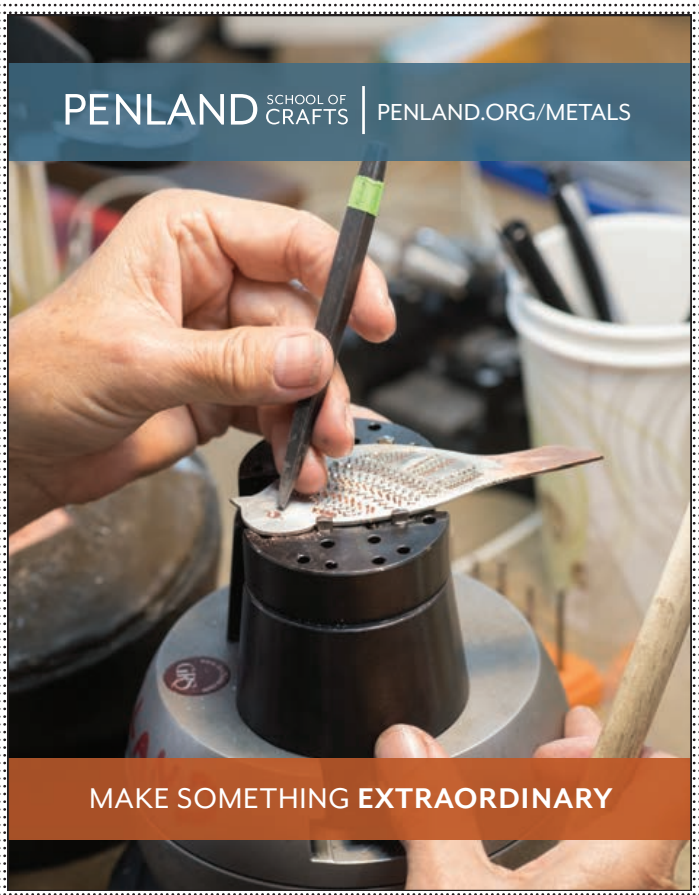

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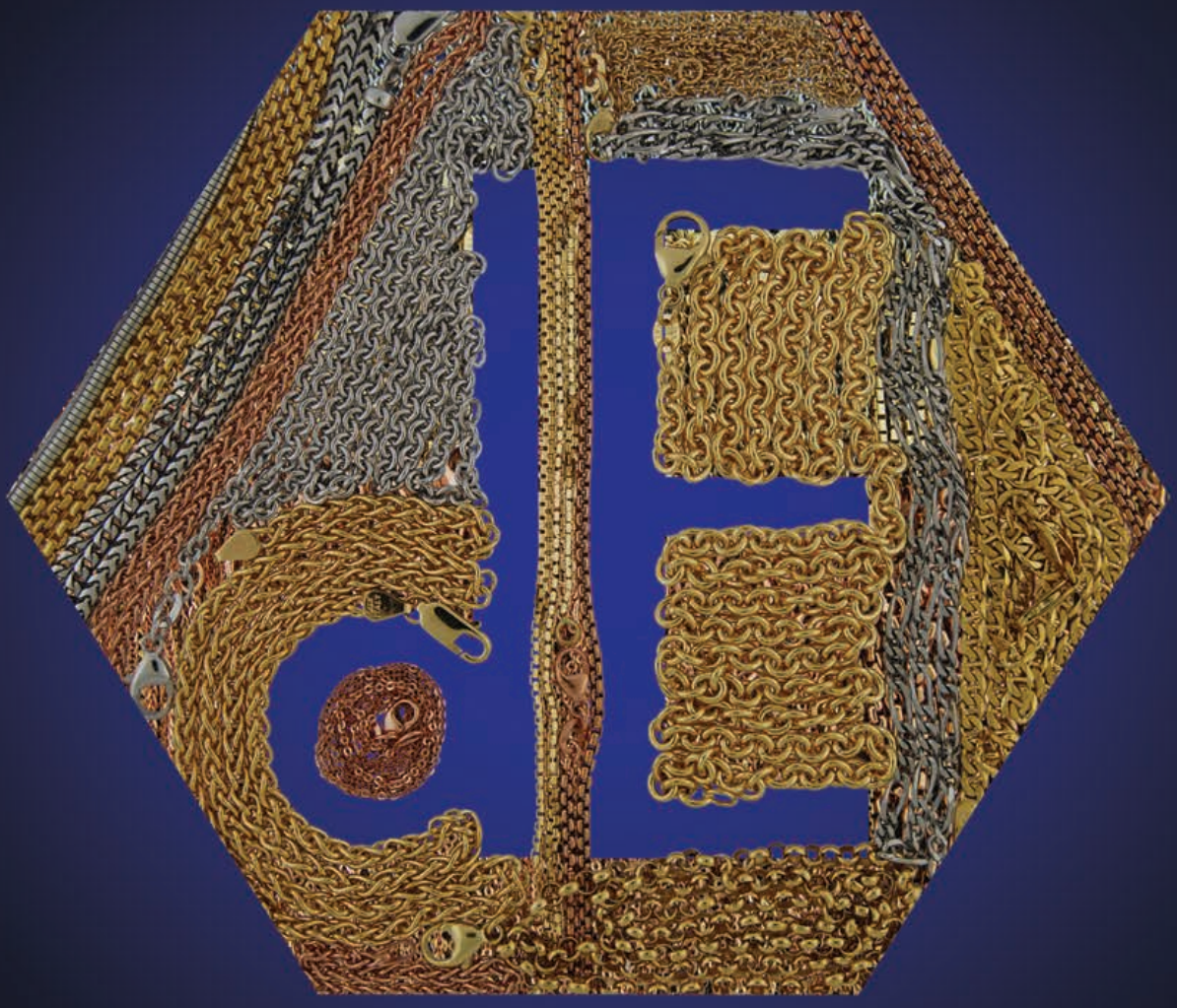

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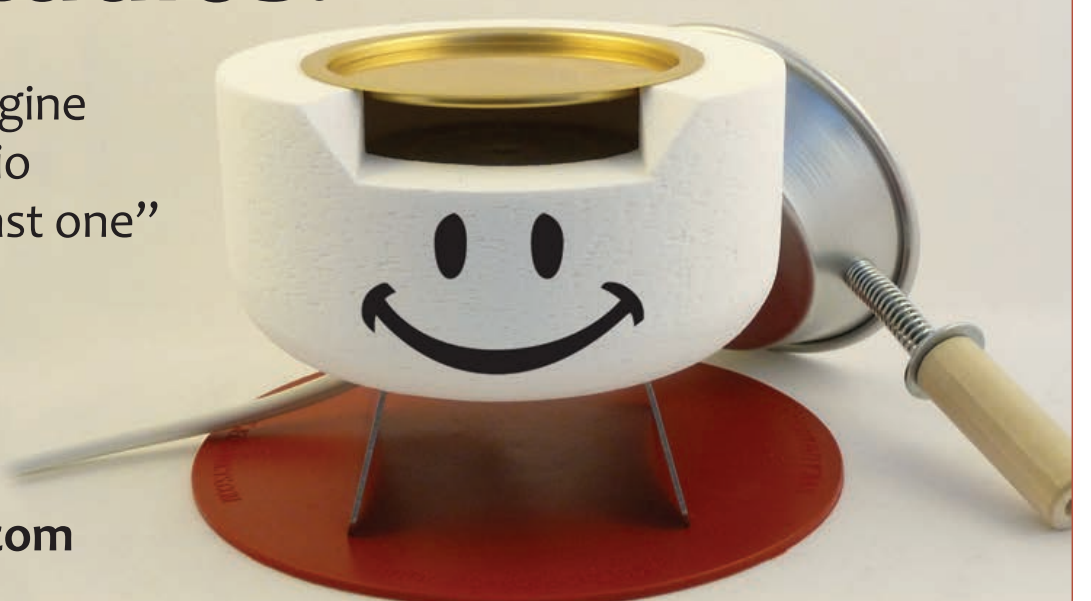

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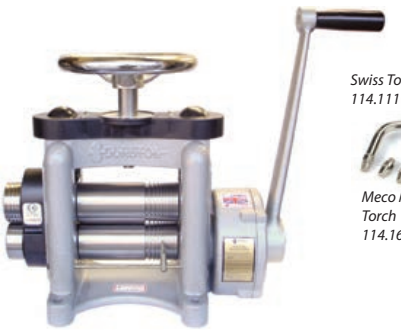

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# Follow the Sound of the Hammer

Walk down a dusty street in Dakar, Senegal, holding a file and an ingot of silver. Listen. Wait. You will hear it. The tap-tap-tap-tap of a hammer shaping metal fresh from the forge. Follow that sound. Find the jeweler. You have never met him before; you barely speak the same language. And yet, because he sees that you are a jeweler too, you are family. He invites you into his shop. You make a trade: He shows you his work, you offer him supplies from the Toolbox Initiative. He pours tea. Then he picks up his hammer and sits at an anvil on the floor. Tap-tap-tap-tap. The heartbeat of the jeweler.

Many West African jewelers forge their own tools.

Sékouba Salo of Guinea weaves a bracelet around a balsawood core. (The finished bracelet is shown at right.)

Sékouba used pliers, a borrowed hand vise and a torch to make this wire-wrapped silver bracelet.


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### Toolbox Initiative

A simple gift of saw blades and a drawplate can change the lives of jewelers in developing nations. That's the idea behind the Toolbox Initiative, a non-profit that relies on volunteers to personally distribute tools and supplies to West African jewelers. Visit **toolboxinitiative.org**.

Meet Toolbox Initiative founders Matthieu Cheminée and Tim McCreight, watch the For the Love of Jewelers video and learn how you can get involved: Visit **riojeweler.com**.